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Jack White's
Expansive Reach

The 18th Annual Relix Festival Guide

Sounds of the Summer

Tune-Yards

Keys N Krates

CHVRCHES

Del McCoury Band

The Revivalists

Blackberry Smoke

Natalie Prass

Rainbow Kitten Surprise

Pigeons Playing Ping Pong

Jonathan Wilson

and more!

Issue 288
June 2018
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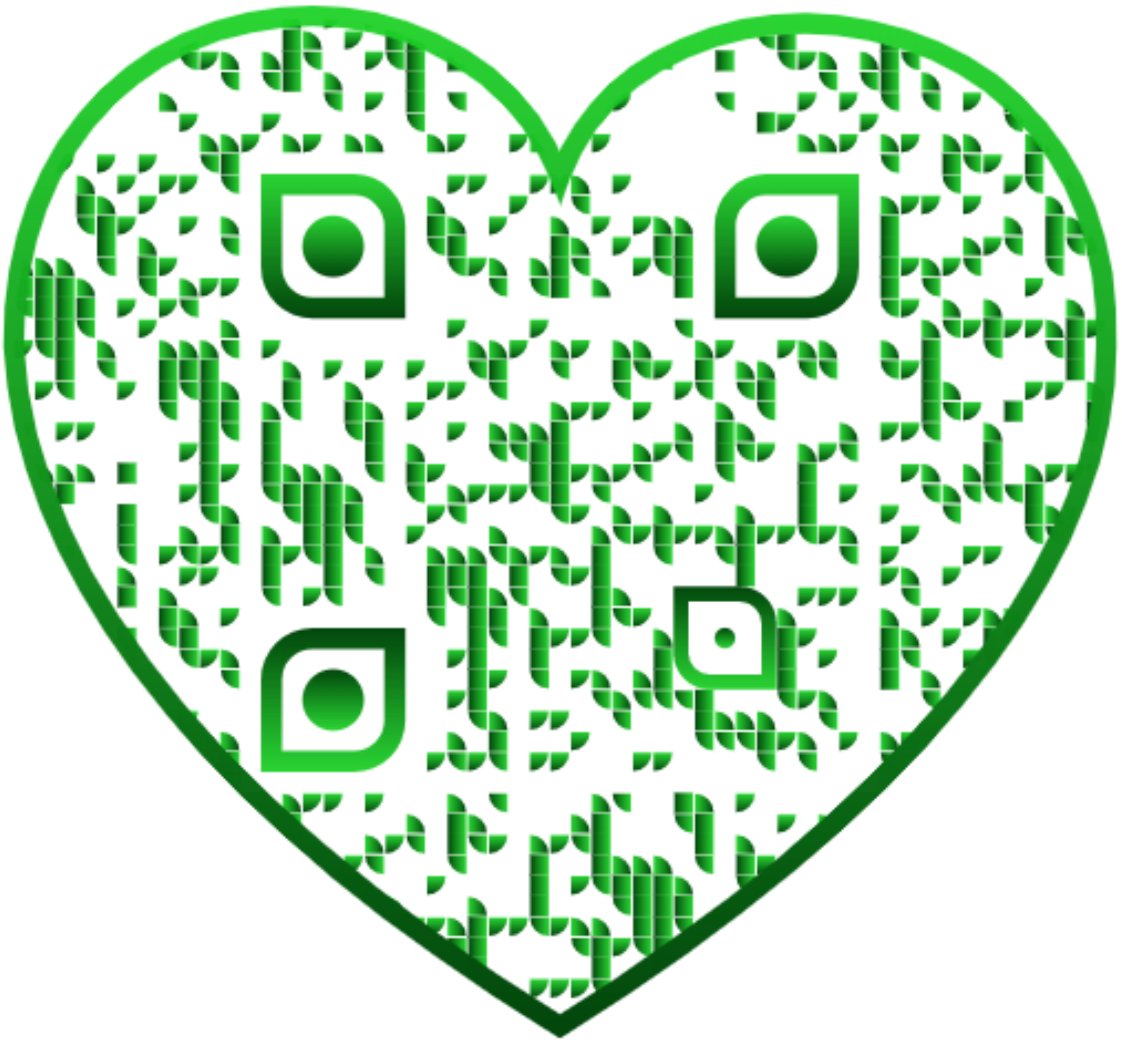

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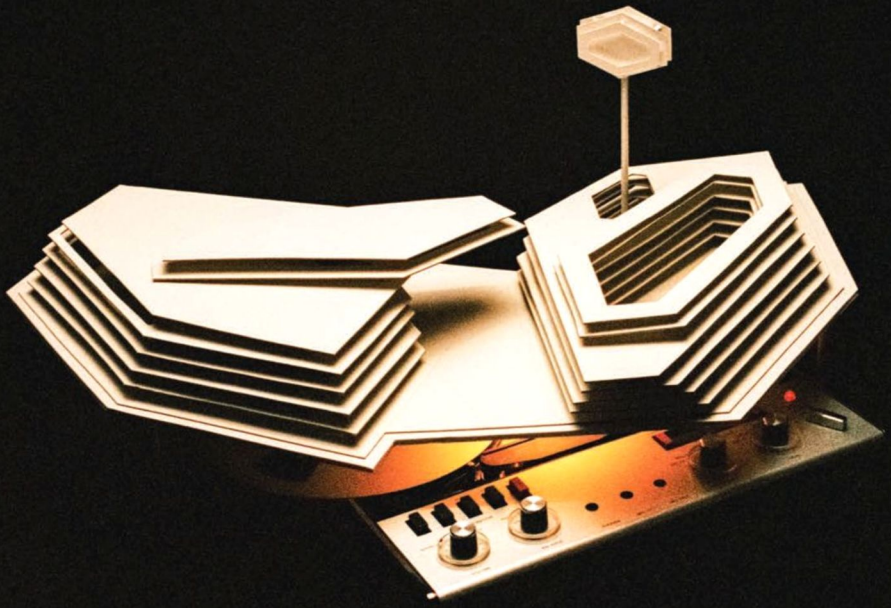

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V45 NO4

In the grand tradition of B-sides, we've decided to offer a bonus track of our own from the June cover story. Here's Jack White's account of how Al Capone led him to record Antonín Dvořák's 1894 composition "Humoresque" as the closing selection on his new album, *Boarding House Reach*.

I'M LOOKING FOR THINGS all the time—whether it's through antique stores or auctions or dealers and collectors. A lot of it is American history-based, but also preservation-based when it comes to music.

I have a lot of friends who know what I'm interested in, and Ben Blackwell, who works at Third Man Records, found an auction with what was described as "handwritten sheet music" by Al Capone. The description also indicated that while at Alcatraz, Al Capone convinced the warden to pay for music supplies—whatever "convinced" means, whether he paid off or had a gentlemanly conversation or threatened. [Laughs.] *But, somehow, he convinced the warden to start a music program at Alcatraz and, supposedly, he had a band there called the Rock Islanders with Machine Gun Kelly on drums.*

Al Capone, circa 1935, and his score for the Alcatraz Rock Islanders

That's all I knew: I didn't know if he wrote this song; I had never heard of "Humoresque." So I looked it up and said, "OK, it's the 1930s. I'm going to look up 'Humoresque 78.'" I couldn't find anything so I thought, "Maybe it's a song he wrote?" I had no idea.

I won the auction, and when I went to New York to record this album, there were five or six musicians I was working with. I asked if any of them knew how to read music. I can read, but I do so very slowly. However, in a few minutes Neal Evans and Louis Cato were able to read it and play it. We all immediately thought, "Wow, what a beautiful song!"

I didn't even perform on it; they were recording it on piano and drums. While they were doing that, the manager of the place [Roberta Findlay]—she'd been there the whole three days but had never said anything to us except "good morning." But she heard this music, came into the control room and asked, "Why are you playing 'Humoresque' by Dvořák?" It struck her as such a weird thing in the middle of everything else we were recording. I asked her what she meant and she explained that it was a classical piece.

So I thought, "Well, that explains the music. Now, what's with the lyrics? Did Al Capone write these lyrics?" So we recorded it and I sang it, still not knowing really what was going on with it. Then, I came home and did some more looking around on the internet. It took a couple months, but I finally found a website where somebody had recorded a piano player and a female singer performing several different versions of lyrical attempts at "Humoresque." They ranged from what we had—which was done by a guy named Howard Johnson—all the way to some really bawdy stuff like, "Do not use the bathroom while the train is in the station." This person's site explained that many attempts had been made to put lyrics to this melody because everyone loved the melody so much.

From all of that, I can think of two possibilities: While Al Capone was in Alcatraz, he either remembered this version from sheet music he had owned at some point in his life, or he got a copy of that sheet music as part of the music program in Alcatraz and made a hand-drawn copy of it to give to another band member so they could both read it at the same time. That's all I know.

After that, we found a picture of Al Capone playing a tenor banjo, which is a bizarre offshoot to be interested in. All of it is so wild and unbelievable. You have this band with Machine Gun Kelly, and it's at Alcatraz! I mean, if you put this in a movie, people would say, "There's no way—this is unbelievable." It would never work. I mean imagine putting that in The Untouchables? *It would look ridiculous.* [Laughs.]

But it is a beautiful song. So we recorded it, gave everyone their proper credits and now it closes out the album.

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ON THE COVER

Theon Delgado shot Jack White.

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THU, AUG 23
UMPHREY'S McGEE 9:45PM
LETTUCE 8:45PM
UMPHREY'S McGEE 7:30PM
LETTUCE 6:30PM
BUTCHER BROWN 6:00PM
ERIN & THE WILDFIRE 5:30PM
JERRY DANCE PARTY 5:00PM
RELIX STAGE
JOE RUSSO'S ALMOST DEAD 11:00PM

FRI, AUG 24
WIDESPREAD PANIC 10:00PM
GEORGE CLINTON & P-FUNK 8:45PM
UMPHREY'S McGEE 7:15PM
TOOTS & THE MAYTALS 6:00PM
MOON TAXI 5:00PM
TURKUAZ 4:00PM
LUKAS NELSON & PROMISE OF THE REAL 3:00PM
BAND OF CHANGES 2:30PM
GHOST LIGHT 1:30PM
CAITLYN SMITH 12:45PM
RELIX STAGE
JOE RUSSO'S ALMOST DEAD MIDNIGHT

SAT, AUG 25
DEAD & COMPANY 2 SETS 9:15PM
TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND 7:15PM
KELLER & THE KEELS 6:15PM
PIGEONS PLAYING PING PONG 5:15PM
FOUNDATION OF FUNK 4:15PM
BIG SOMETHING 3:15PM
AGENTS OF GOOD ROOTS 2:30PM
THE SUFFERS 1:45PM
SOUTHERN AVENUE 1:15PM
PEOPLE'S BLUES OF RICHMOND 12:45PM
RELIX STAGE
LETTUCE CELEBRATES JGB MIDNIGHT

SUN, AUG 26
DEAD & COMPANY 2 SETS 8:45PM
TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND 6:45PM
SHERYL CROW 5:30PM
BLUES TRAVELER 4:30PM
MATISYAHU 3:30PM
SPAFFORD 2:30PM
GRATEFUL GOSPEL W/ KELLER WILLIAMS 12:00PM

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On Relix.com:
Bettye LaVette, Dr. Dog, The Mallett Brothers featuring Jon Fishman, Spafford, Collective Soul, Field Report and Fruition are just a few of the artists who have recorded intimate sets in the *Relix* office in recent months. Be sure to visit Relix.com/video to see what went down.

On Jambands.com:
Ghost Light co-founders Tom Hamilton and Holly Bowling offer a peak at their new project; Elephant Revival looks ahead to their Red Rocks swan song; Dave Schools takes a deep dive into Widespread Panic's historic *Panic in the Streets* performance; and Benmont Tench, Hiss Golden Messenger, Chris Funk, Billy Strings and many others celebrate Jerry Garcia's Jubilee.

FEATURES

62 | All Within Reach
BY DEAN BUDNICK

Jack White has been many things throughout his long, singular career—from makeup-clad, blues-punk guitarist to uniform-mandating vinyl enthusiast and unexpected main-stage headliner—but one thing he's never been is the leader of a fun, good-time party band. And while the former White Stripe still hasn't crossed that line quite yet, his first album in four years is an unexpected journey into the ether with the help of some of the funk and hip-hop worlds' finest groove players.

47 | The 18th Annual Relix Festival Guide: Set III
BY MATT INMAN

There was a time when festivalgoing was more a state of mind than an active verb but, in the past few years, the large-scale concert gathering has become an authentic American pastime representing almost any type of summer experience. For close to two decades, we've culled the best fests out there for our annual guide and, this year, we're proud to offer our most comprehensive listings yet, as well as profiles of summertime heroes like **Pigeons Playing Ping Pong**, **CHVRCHES** and **Rainbow Kitten Surprise**.

44 | The Road Goes on Forever
BY RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA

It's the classic rock-and-roll story, and **Blackberry Smoke** lives it so well: A musician moves to the big city, links up with some friends and ends up providing the soundtrack for a new generation of fans weaned on those authentic roots-rock sounds. Now, after years in the trenches, sharing the studio with Gregg Allman and **Robert Randolph**, **Charlie Starr** and his band of brothers have fully stepped out of the shadows and pushed their jammy country-rock into the future with their latest offering, *Find a Light*.

41 | That Space-Age Feeling
BY MIKE GREENHAUS

As a well-respected solo artist, in-demand producer and the Southern-transplant party host who revived a sound that Jackson Browne helped make famous, **Jonathan Wilson** already had some pretty serious bragging rights by the time he got the call to work with Roger Waters a few years ago. However, despite helping shepherd Dawes and Father John Misty to fame, Wilson has never been the type to rest on his laurels. And his first solo release in five years, *Rare Birds*, is a headphones-approved sonic journey that may one day be the Rosetta stone for a maximalist genre of its own.

38 | Observation of My Own Complicity
BY MIKE AYERS

Merrill Garbus has come a long way since she made her first **Tune-Yards** record a decade ago, armed primarily with a ukulele. A year into Trump's reign, the thirty-something Northeast native's current world feels pretty different, too. So it isn't surprising that her latest LP, *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*, takes a close look at the cold, hard modern world—wrapping those feelings up in a set of dance-floor-ready beats tailor-made for the perfect end-of-the-world party.

35 | Natural Born Pickers
BY JEFF TAMARKIN

Del McCoury may not have technically invented bluegrass, yet, throughout the past few decades, the silver-haired singer/guitarist has undoubtedly served as the patriarch of the genre's first family. This spring, Del and his boys will add to that growing legacy with two fresh studio albums, bringing a classic style of music to a new subset of fans weaned on rock-and-roll, Americana and, of course, those four friends from Vermont.

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THE DECEMBERISTS

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COHEED AND CAMBRIA & TAKING BACK SUNDAY

AUGUST 31
REBELUTION

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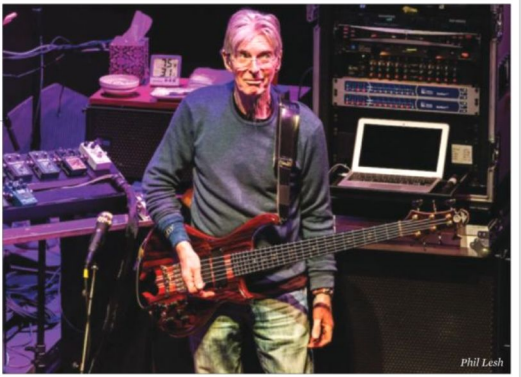
Here's what readers are talking about online and offline


Phil Lesh

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Send your thoughts to letters@relix.com.

PHIL LESH CELEBRATES HIS 78TH BIRTHDAY

Phil Lesh rang in his birthday in style this year, hosting a three-night stand at Port Chester, N.Y.'s Capitol Theatre. The festivities kicked off on March 14 with a special double bill alongside old friend Steve Winwood. (Though the musicians didn't collaborate, the former Traffic member did wish Lesh a happy birthday from the stage.) Lesh's Terrapin Family Band backed him throughout the run, offering a number of Grateful Dead favorites ("Tennessee Jed") and deep cuts ("Mason's Children") as well as covers of Bob Dylan ("It's All Over Now Baby Blue"), Led Zeppelin ("No Quarter") and New Riders of the Purple Sage ("Henry"). Westchester resident John Scofield served as a guitarist on March 15 and 16, sitting in with the Terrapin Family Band for the celebratory shows. On the evening of Lesh's 78th birthday, March 15, Cap proprietor and Relix *publisher Peter Shapiro presented the bassist with a birthday cake. The First Assistant Chief of the Port Chester Fire Department even gave Lesh a Dead-themed fireman's helmet and anointed him an honorary member of the department.*

Below, Relix *readers share their thoughts on the Grateful Dead bassist's birthday festivities:*

There's so much love for Phil and rightly so. His playing at 78 years old is nothing short of phenomenal...
Mike L. via Jambands.com

Family Band is good, but we need Phil and Friends or the Quintet to do a tour to really expand on the music of the Dead.
Ray Kucharski via Facebook

Happy Birthday, Phil!! Thanks for the ride!
Sarah Catlett via Facebook

Glad the Port Chester Fire Department is on hand because they're still setting us on fire!
Doug Alexander via Facebook

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND CONFIRM BEACON THEATRE RUN, ASK FANS FOR SUGGESTIONS

After confirming their annual multi-night residency at the Beacon Theatre, Tedeschi Trucks Band turned to social media to ask their fans a very important question: "Who do you want to see join TTB at the Beacon this year?" Last year, Trey Anastasio was among the band's unannounced guests, performing a version of Leon Russell's "Delta Lady" as well as TTB's debut rendition of the Allman Brothers' classic "Mountain Jam." Other sit-ins included Wilco guitarist Nels Cline, Norah Jones, John Medeski, The Wood Brothers, Marcus King and more.

Below fans speculate on who they'd like to see jump onstage with TTB:

Taj, Dickey, Jorma.
Durango Joe via Jambands.com

Eric Clapton, Warren Haynes, Jimmy Herring.
Mak via Jambands.com

Oz Noy, Wynton Marsalis.
Paul via Jambands.com

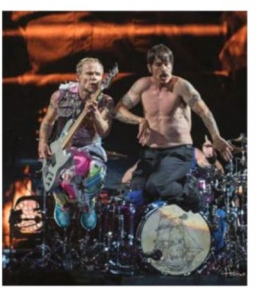
Whoever [the guests] are I know they'll be great. They are my favorite band and can do no wrong.
Timothy Chapman via Facebook

Dickey, Sonny Landreth, Ry Cooder, Jack Pearson, Bernard Allison, Larry Campbell, Trey, Mud Morganfield, Ice Cube, Mike Campbell, Walter Trout.
KB via Jambands.com

RECORD STORE PROFILE:

COW RECORDS, SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

With a $1,500 loan from his father, Greg Hildebrand opened Cow Records in 1989. The shop, nestled comfortably in the Ocean Beach neighborhood of San Diego, is just steps from the beach, and hosts patrons of all ages, from their early twenties to their eighties. According to Hildebrand, his friends joke that it's as if he's on vacation every day. "Even though it's not a big money maker I love being here," he says. With an inventory that blends records new and old, Cow Records caters to a variety of music fans. (Shop employee Al Howard even started his own label The Redwoods, which has earned a fair amount of renown in the San Diego music scene.) "People call about specific things, and we can say 'Yes, we have John Coltrane records,' or 'Yes, we have doo-wop records' or 'Yes, we have classic rock records.' We like to be well rounded," Hildebrand says.



FANS.COM PHOTO CONTEST

Red Hot Chili Peppers at Bonnaroo 2017. Photo by Home Team Photography's Craig Baird. Want to be published in *Relix*? Just upload an original photo from a live music event to *Relix*'s Fans.com Photo Contest app. Noted photographer Jay Blakesberg will select the winner from the group of 10 finalists that receives the most votes.

Bill Kelly

INSTAPRINT

Gary Clark Jr. (@garyclarkjr) had just unleashed his inner Bruce Lee when he had a bit of an accident. "DRUNK KUNG FU FAIL. Drink responsibly," he joked on Instagram, flashing his bandaged right hand for a mirror selfie. Thankfully, the guitarist's upcoming summer tour won't be affected; the injury was on his strumming hand, so Clark was back on his axe alongside Keith Richards, Warren Haynes, Mavis Staples, Ziggy Marley and others just a few weeks later for the star-studded Love Rocks benefit in New York City. As they say: The show must go on!

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JUBILEE: A CELEBRATION OF JERRY GARCIA

THE THEATRE AT ACE HOTEL

LOS ANGELES

MARCH 30

BY LARSON SUTTON // PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVEN ROOD

Ed Helms set the tone for **Jubilee: A Celebration of Jerry Garcia** from the show's opening remarks, recalling, with a knowing grin, the childhood moment when his Grateful Dead *Reckoning* cassette subverted a family car ride. It was a simple story that rang true for so many in attendance.

Since Jerry Garcia's passing in August of 1995, there have been countless musical memorials to the iconic singer, songwriter and guitarist. This one distinguished itself from many past tributes thanks to both its focus on Garcia's roots-leaning material and its genre-spanning cast (drawn mostly from outside the core jamband community). But despite the evening's eclectic guests, the entire show flowed seamlessly into a single celebration of Garcia's rich, varied collection of songs.

Garcia's daughter, **Trixie**, mingled with musicians and fans alike in the theater lobby before the show, shaking hands and smiling for selfies. She was excited to see the new energy and space these artists injected into the scene. And she was proud, in particular, of the Center for Biological Diversity (and its 64 lawsuits pending against President Donald Trump), one of three of the concert's benefiting charities. "It's just wonderful to see all our old friends and family again," Trixie said of the evening, which fell during a holiday weekend.

Throughout the two-set performance, the night's musical director, keyboardist **Benmont Tench**—and his house band of guitarist **Sean Watkins**, bassist **Tyler Chester** and drummer **Jay Bellerose**—welcomed an eclectic and revolving roster of special guests. Lit by a swinging, mostly acoustic "Dire Wolf" opener from **Josh Ritter** and **Sara Watkins**, the reverential performance shifted from song to song—from Americana, bluegrass and folk to alternative and classic rock. **Sam Bush** brandished his mandolin on "Shady Grove" and Hiss Golden Messenger's **MC Taylor**, accompanied by guitarist **Mike Campbell**, offered a grim and somber "Loser." The first-half highlight came in juxtaposition; a beautifully paced "To Lay Me Down" from rising roots talent **Billy Strings**, followed by Los Lobos' **David Hidalgo** and alt-rock hero **Stephen Malkmus** joining forces, turning "Bertha" into a punky manifesto.

Late in the second set, Sean Watkins revealed the plan: A third of the evening's repertoire nodded to Garcia's bluegrass roots, a third to his solo output and a third to his Grateful Dead catalog. Certainly the run from **Willie Watson**'s takes on "Legend of the Johnson Boys" and "Jack-

A-Roe," to Hidalgo's return for a rollicking "Evangeline" and driving, upbeat "Friend of the Devil" (with **Margo Price** seated behind the drums) did just that.

Jubilee did suffer from several solos and vocal cues that were buried or lost in the mix—a hazard of any show featuring a multitude of guests. After a closing "Ripple," interpreted gorgeously as a folk anthem by **Jamie Drake**, the night climaxed with an encore sing-along based around "Goin' Down the Road Feelin' Bad." While delivered enthusiastically by the nearly full cast of the night's artists, the finale was somewhat overshadowed by a louder-than-needed rhythm guitar. It didn't matter; the spirit of the effort outmatched any bump in the road.

Sam Bush shares "Shady Grove" with Benmont Tench.

Jamie Drake, Justine Bennett, Mary Beth Richardson, Margo Price, Willie Watson and Sara Watkins were just some of the musicians who joined in for an all-star take on "Goin' Down The Road Feeling Bad."

Mike Campbell performs on a Wolf replica guitar with Jason Sinay and Tyler Chester.

Molly Tuttle emerged for a few tunes Garcia played outside the Dead, including "Legend of the Johnson Boys," which is featured on a new collection of the guitarist's early recordings, and "Long Lonesome Road."

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The Decemberists return to the Riverside

Stephen Bloch

THE DECEMBERISTS

RIVERSIDE THEATER
MILWAUKEE
APRIL 8

In early April, **The Decemberists** made their long-awaited return to the Riverside Theater, an opulent, historic venue that the ensemble has played numerous times over their illustrious career, for an all-encompassing performance that pushed past the two-hour mark. While some have described their new record *I'll be Your Girl* as a synth-heavy departure—and there are certainly some electronic compositions—their latest LP is still very much a Decemberists album in the truest sense, filled with folk imagery and both tongue-in-cheek and actual angst.

The evening's opening number, "Everything Is Awful," demonstrated the tight instrumentation and melodies that The Decemberists' shows are known for, colored by **Colin Meloy**'s clear disdain for the current White House administration. (He certainly didn't mince words and, judging by the cheers that filled the room, many in attendance agreed with his assessment.)

Even though *I'll be Your Girl* is less than a month old, the crowd already knew where to sing along, and Meloy encouraged the audience participation. As the evening progressed, some deep cuts made their way into the setlist, too. The spy-thriller-themed "The Bagman's Gambit" and "For My Own True Love" were unadulterated rarities, beautifully played; drummer **John Moen**'s syncopated beats mixed perfectly with the eerie organ of **Jenny Conlee**. The group's first take on the *What a Terrible World, What a Beautiful World* tune "Lake Song" of the tour—an absolutely sublime tale of teen anguish boasting some Garcia-esque riffs from lead guitarist **Chris Funk**—was the most welcome surprise for those more-than-casual fans. Guest musicians **Kelly Hogan** and **Nora O'Connor** also provided stellar backup vocals, guitar and synth.

However, the show's true highlight was the first encore opener "Rusalka, Rusalka / Wild Rushes," a song about a siren-like water nymph who lures men to their death—pretty typical epic story fare from this band. The "Wild

Judah and the Lion make their NorVa debut

Rushes" component of the number contains all the drama of the best selections from The Decemberists' concept album *The Hazards of Love* (whose tracks have unfortunately been shelved thus far on this tour). What followed was "Ben Franklin's Song," an expulsive, heavy cut written by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Of course, no Decemberists show would be complete without the gruesome tale of being swallowed by a whale in "The Mariner's Revenge Song." While Meloy may not be too happy with the state of the world, thankfully, he's able to channel his frustrations into a powerful statement.

Stephen Bloch

JUDAH AND THE LION

THE NORVA
NORFOLK, VA.
MARCH 18

On a Sunday night, before a sold-out house at Norfolk, Va.'s NorVa, **Judah Akers** remained in motion, gracefully moving across the stage and into a sea of fans that stretched to the venue's doors. As the band sang many of their hits, recent tunes from *Folk Hop N' Roll* and the album's deluxe companion release, and some juicy covers, including one "from the fifth grade," the three-piece ensemble—**Brian Macdonald** (mandolin), **Nate Zuercher** (banjo) and Akers (guitar, vocals)—sounded almost orchestral.

The lightshow and an opening audio sound bite of John F. Kennedy were integral to the shape of the concert. Some images behind the performers elicited loud cheers from their fans. At times, Akers divided the crowd in two—a mandolin side and a banjo side—to compete in singing familiar refrains. There were some surprises as well. During one song, fellow Nashvillians **Colony House** joined the band. For another, the harmonic electrofolkian **Tall Heights** from Boston performed with the group. (The two acts opened for Judah, both anticipating the headliner's raw energy.)

Later, Akers apologized for mispronouncing Norfolk, humbly admitting that he knew it was Nor-fuck instead of Nor-folk. "Forgive my Southern-ness," he said, perhaps nodding to the band's genesis as, in part, a faith-based folk/bluegrass band while all three members were attending the same Nashville college.

Akers remained chatty throughout the night, explaining how he transformed from a baseball star to a band member and recalling the threesome's early days performing for crowds of five. He later polled the crowd to gauge who was seeing Judah for the first time; it appeared that almost everyone raised their hands.

Yet, by the end of the evening, seemingly everyone was singing collectively, aloud and in shared bliss.

Ron Wray

Ron Wray

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LOS LOBOS

FRED KAVLI THEATRE
THOUSAND OAKS, CALIF.
MARCH 17

"One Time, One Night" once again with Los Lobos

It's technically inaccurate to call this a hometown show for **Los Lobos**. It also isn't fully correct to call this return to Southern California "Almost Acoustic"—as some previous, similarly structured performances have been. Yet, for the renowned combo, their March 17 outing had all the echoes of their East LA birthplace 40 miles down the freeway.

With amplified acoustic guitars, and the inclusion of longtime-drummer **Cougar Estrada**, the Wolves offered a slightly quieter but no less effective historical cross-section of their four-plus decades together during the Thousand Oaks suburban set. Despite making numerous albums that have creatively pushed sonic boundaries, Los Lobos attacked their compositions with bare, shimmering simplicity. Granted, bassist **Conrad Lozano** and keyboardist **Steve Berlin**—when not blowing some swinging saxophone—stayed electrified for most of the 80-minute appearance, and having Estrada on a full drum kit put a percussive spike in the punch. Still, it brought to mind the early days in the neighborhood when the band played traditional Mexican music, unplugged, for the locals.

It's fitting, then, for a group that draws up a different setlist for each outing, to open with "One Time, One Night," and guitarist **David Hidalgo**'s high-end vocals shined on the portrait of an evening in America. Hidalgo's counterpoint, guitarist **Cesar Rosas**, greeted the near-capacity audience with "Happy St. Patrick's Day," then offered some chugging, dark-sunglasses R&B on "Set Me Free (Rosa Lee)," while Berlin wailed on sax. They turned to their masterpiece, *Kiko*, for a fine reading of "Reva's House," before moving on to "Chuco's Cumbia," with **Louie Pérez** strumming *jarana* as the crowd rose to dance.

Another *Kiko* cut, "Short Side of Nothing," slid into their mini-set of traditional and neo-classics that ranged from "Sabor a Mí," and Ritchie Valens' "Come On, Let's Go," to the title track from the Lobos' 1988 Tejano/Mariachi album, *La Pistola y El Corazón*, and Perez on lead vocals for *Kiko*'s "Saint Behind the Glass." A raucous pairing of "Mexico Americano," propelled by Hidalgo on accordion, and the always-welcome "Volver, Volver," transitioned nicely back to the New Orleans' shuffle of "I Got Loaded." The Lobos closed with an extended, inspired rendition of hidden gem "Teresa," from their Los Super Seven side project, and encored with the Lozano-led "Guantanamera" and two songs that nodded to rock-and-roll's rich heritage, their crossover cover of "La Bamba" and The Rascals' vintage No. 1, "Good Lovin'."

For some bands, the decision to unplug is for effect or novelty. For Los Lobos, it was simply one more great night in the enduring and rich career of the band from East LA.

Larson Sutton

Scott Dudelson

LUCIUS

TOWN HALL
NEW YORK
MARCH 22

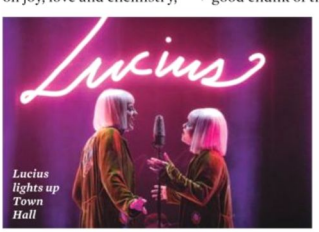
When **Lucius' Jess Wolfe** and **Holly Laessig** sing together, they can be a nearly unstoppable force. That much has been clear since the indie-pop group came to prominence and caught the attention of luminaries like Roger Waters. (He tapped Wolfe and Laessig to sing on his massive, ongoing Us + Them tour, where their nightly take on Pink Floyd's "The Great Gig in the Sky" has left arena after arena speechless.) But to focus solely on the duo's voices does a disservice to what Lucius accomplish as a band, and when the group convened at New York's historic Town Hall, they delivered on every ounce of potential they've displayed over the years, making for a spellbinding, invigorating evening.

Under the glow of a stark, but impressive, lighting display—including a glowing neon sign lit up with the band's name—the quintet spun out one confectionary gem after another, but served them up with something of a twist.

On this go-round, Lucius opted to ditch the synths and electric guitars in favor of the more acoustic instrumentation featured on their new LP, *Nudes*. They sounded reawakened, back in touch with the joy, love and chemistry that brought them together in the first place—and for a band like Lucius that thrives on joy, love and chemistry, that is a very good thing. The gentler arrangements didn't diminish the group's dynamic energy and atmosphere, but allowed other qualities to come to the foreground. On tunes like "Tempest," "Neighbors" and a stunning performance of "Madness," the nuances in instrumentation, in their vocals and in the songwriting itself came across more viscerally than ever.

Of course, the twin-clad singers' voices still guided the show, and adorned in their matching wigs, capes and glittery makeup, they struck a perfect balance between the intimacy of the acoustic renditions and the band's performance spirit. The way Wolfe and Laessig's voices can mesh together can feel almost supernatural, from a whisper to a soaring high note—alternating harmonies, falling into unison. The exuberant crowd was often left breathless with each gut-punching melody. This made it all the more impactful when they spoke to the audience, feeding off the love in the room as they invited everyone to sing with them on a powerful performance of "Two of Us on the Run" and when Wolfe, reflecting on an emotional week, reminded everyone to appreciate how "precious and beautiful every moment is." This message rang all the more clear as it arrived during one of these moments.

While the Lucius frontwomen will spend a good chunk of this year back on tour with Waters, one can't help but anticipate what might be in store for their own project. ***Carter Shelter***



Lucius lights up Town Hall

Courtney Armitage

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MARTY STUART & HIS FABULOUS SUPERLATIVES

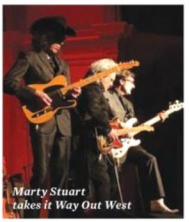
MEMORIAL HALL OTR
CINCINNATI
MARCH 30

Playing inside the gorgeous and intimate confines of Memorial Hall OTR, **Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives** turned in a spellbinding show as diverse as it was electrifying. The stage was unadorned—save for a ring of instruments and a projection of the band's logo (an Indian head) on a screen above—but the music more than made up for the lack of visual stimulation.

Ostensibly a country band, Stuart and the Fab Supers—drummer **Harry Stinson**, guitarist **Kenny Vaughan** and bassist **Chris Scruggs** (grandson of Earl)—are equally adept at rockabilly, surf music, honky-tonk, folk, bluegrass and true rock-and-roll, and they touched on all those styles in front of a near-sellout crowd that was as energized as the music itself.

Offering a mix of covers, tracks from their recent, hazy, psychedelic *Way Out West* LP—"It'll leave you feeling like you just spent 21 days on Willie Nelson's bus," Stuart said—and an as-yet-unreleased album of instrumental surf songs, the ensemble turned in a stupefying, 100-minute set that seemed to fly by in a tenth of that time.

Stuart, a veteran of Lester Flatt and Johnny Cash's bands, was the nominal frontman, dressed, like his bandmates, in black and playing electric lead and rhythm guitar, acoustic guitar and mandolin. A fine axeman, Stuart is a virtuoso on mandolin—a fact made clear when he accompanied himself on a solo rendition of "Orange Blossom Special" that had audience members leaping to their feet mid-song as he played with excessive speed and precision.


Marty Stuart takes it Way Out West

There were some local nods, too. Early on, the band jumped into "Cincinnati, Ohio," referencing the Ohio River's demarcation of the Mason-Dixon Line. From then on, the hometown crowd was putty, even as Stuart, in a hotbed of conservatism, declared that he has "opinions" about modern country music and expressed his concern about environmental issues.

A generous and magnanimous bandleader, Stuart, with a black scarf around his neck, often and wisely ceded the mic to his mates.

Playing a glittery, turquoise double-neck and rocking shades and a cowboy hat, Vaughan led the group through barn-burning renditions of "Country Music Got a Hold on Me" and "Hot Like That," reeling off scorching solos that found him switching from six to 12 strings and leaving Stuart and the band to gawk along with the rest of the house.

Stinson—who possesses a gorgeous, high tenor—stepped to the front, brushing a lone snare drum and slaying concertgoers with a pointed turn on Woody Guthrie's "Ballad of Pretty Boy Floyd." And when he wasn't singing lead, Stinson added precise harmonies to the group's beautiful four-way blend, which reached a heavenly apex on "Angels Rock Me to Sleep."

Plucking an upright, Scruggs used his turn in the spotlight to pay homage to the locale, following a raucous and ecstatically received turn on "Cincinnati Lou" with a pretty and similarly well-loved version of Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky," on which he good-naturedly imitated the bluegrass legend, eliciting mid-song laughter.

Throughout the evening, Vaughan used a red Rickenbacker to evoke the jangly sound of The Byrds as the rhythm section provided a Beatles backbeat. He played acoustic guitar on Marty Robbins' "El Paso," scrawling Jerry Garcia-esque runs as his bandmates harmonized around a single mic. And he strangled a Stratocaster, honoring the legacies of Link Wray and Dick Dale on a couple of mind-blowing instrumentals and playing full-bore rock music that somehow didn't seem out of place in what was allegedly a country-music concert.

Left alone onstage, Stuart paid tribute to Cash with a lilting original called "Dark Bird." With his band plugged in and supercharged by his side, he shook the building with "The Whiskey Ain't Workin'" and his own "Time Won't Wait," which ended the stellar performance with a terrific—some might say a fabulously superlative—bang. ***Kristopher Weiss***

RHYTHM N' BLOOMS FESTIVAL

OLD CITY
KNOXVILLE, TENN.
APRIL 6–8

Spread across seven venues, ranging in size from the intimate environs of bars and breweries in

Kristopher Weiss

Knoxville's historic Old City to the open air of the Cripple Creek stage situated beneath a highway overpass, Rhythm N' Blooms' various offerings are really tied together by a collective *feel* more than anything.

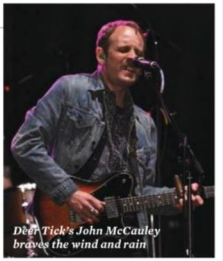
On day one, **Booker T. Jones** brought back memories of the classic Stax era, courtesy of classics such as "Green Onions" and an eclectic assortment of covers, including "Further On Up the Road," "Have You Ever Loved a Woman" and, somewhat surprisingly, "Purple Rain."

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't as welcoming. Rain fell mercilessly, accompanied by a chilling cold. The overpass provided protection, but torrents of water still fell from openings overhead and, by the time that **Deer Tick** took the stage, they appeared to be performing in a monsoon. Nevertheless, they're adept at matching a certain yin to their yang, rocking with a frenzy but keeping the melody intact. A touching sing-along, "Too Sensitive for This World," provided a sense of purpose, even in the midst of a mini maelstrom.

On Saturday, the choices were more challenging. Opting to see **Penny & Sparrow** over **Lilly Hiatt** was a tough call, but the acoustic duo offered ample reward. While their duel singer and-guitar-format bears a certain similarity to Simon and Garfunkel—a cover of "The Boxer" affirmed that—their snappy quips provided added entertainment. **Hayes Carll** kept that humor going along with his Dylanesque delivery, and when he invited buddy **Corb Lund** onstage, their rendition of their co-composition "Bible On the Dash" proved to be as irreverent as the song itself.

However, the day was mostly given to singer/songwriters—**Caroline Spence**, **Dori Freeman**, **Beth Snapp**, **Max Gomes**, **David Francisco** and **Sarah Potenza** all held court in smaller settings. Even the acoustic sound of the **The Young Fables** was clearly capable of packing a crowd all the way to the back of the house. They retraced "Purple Rain" as well, allowing guitarist **Wesley Lunsford** to prove that even folkies can shred. Ultimately, however, the night belonged to **Dr. Dog**, who capped the Cripple Creek lineup by delivering a set of anthemic proportions. The audience left wanting more but was happy to seek shelter all the same.

The festival's final day was its most exhilarating, partially due to the fact that the rain had stopped and the temperatures seemed more moderate. Along with **Sarah Shook and the Disarmers** at the nearby Pilot Light and **Glass Magnet**—a poppy offshoot of local favorites The Black Lillies—playing at Jackson Terminal up the street, a steady sequence of upbeat ensembles beckoned from Cripple Creek. The old-school soul of **The War & Treaty** put the momentum into high gear, followed by the proto-pop of **The Mowgli's** and capped by the rousing gospel groove of **Paul Thorn's Mission Temple Fireworks Revival**, featuring **The McCrary Sisters**. The celebratory spirit proved instantly infectious and, when Thorn went into the crowd for hugs and high fives for an all-too-apt read of The O'Jays' "Love Train," he offered a lesson in how to best embrace an audience. ***Lee Zimmerman***



Deer Tick's John McCauley braves the wind and rain

Alisa R. Cherry

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CARL MONZO

By BRADLEY TUCKER

"YOU CAN OPEN THE doors as early as you want, but the crowd's still going to come at the last minute," says Carl Monzo, president and CEO of National Event Services, of the two-plus decades he's spent working jam-scene concerts. "And the venue needs to be prepared for that."

Over the past 21 years, Monzo and his company have provided event staffing and medical services for some of the biggest touring acts and largest concerts in America, including Dead & Company, Phish, Bonnaroo, Coachella and Stagecoach. His team of ticket takers, ushers, security and other essential event personnel have helped build the festival scene, beginning with the godfather of the modern summer gathering, The Clifford Ball, in 1996.

"With all of these things on the public safety side and, specifically, the security side, it's really about trying to stay ahead of the curve," Monzo says. "We are looking to see what issues we're being confronted with in today's world and then trying to make a decision as to how to best handle them—while being one step ahead of everybody else."

What led you to your first job in the music industry?

I became an emergency medical technician when I was 16, though now you have to be 18 to do that job. I worked in the private ambulance industry, and the company that I worked for was looking to expand outside of traditional emergency medical services. It was roughly the same time, the early-to-mid-'80s, when Pennsylvania started enhancing its laws or at least making recommendations as to what you needed to have from the medical side to put on a mass gathering.

We were interested in that, capitalized on it and started trying to take our services—traditional emergency medical services—into a specialty division. We opened an event medical services company in the mid-1980s. Our first real client was Electric Factory Concerts.

Did that ultimately lead to security?

If you think about it, the medical staff and the security staff probably work closer together than anybody else at the venue. If security has an issue in the venue or somebody gets injured in the venue, then, typically, they would call for the medical staff and bring them to a first aid room inside the venue. So, there's a lot of shared information that goes on. Over the years, we morphed the medical side into the security side and formed one company that provides public safety for the entertainment industry.

In the '90s, we found an opportunity with Phish and their festival division. They were looking for someone on the emergency-medical side that would be able to adequately staff and take care of their guests at their festivals. The first show we did with Phish was The Clifford Ball in '96, and, over the past 22 years, we've established a great relationship ith them. We've worked with Phish on the medical side, the security side and, ultimately, went into the personal security side for the band.

Can you walk us through your process from the time when you first get a call to work a gig through the start of the show?

The process starts with us asking, "What is the tour going entail? How many show dates are there? How close together are those dates? What size venues are you playing in?" Then we take a look at the big picture and ask, "What do you want from security?"

There are tours that have an advanced team and there are tours that will strictly have personal guys; there are tours out there that have nothing. It really depends on what the band's management wants to put into it. There are a number of questions: "Are there any threats involved against the artist or the venues that we're playing at? Are there any issues that we know of ahead of time that we're going to have to deal with?"

Jay Blakesberg

Then, whether it's Bobby and Phil or whether it's Dead & Company, or Phish, it's making sure that venues understand the demographics of a crowd. From the venue perspective, everybody wants to sell more food or beer and, in the jamband scene, the crowd is not coming into the show early. You need to have adequate staffing at the doors. You're going to get that small amount of early arrivals that want to be up against the rail, and then everybody else is going to trickle in at the last minute. It's just a matter of educating the venues.

What causes the most stress on a show day?

Typically, especially if you're doing a multi-day run, the first day is probably the hardest because you are getting used to the venue—how it's laid out, how your movements are going to be. A lot of questions come into play as far as which stairways and dressing rooms are being used: "Are there secondary or tertiary entrances into those areas? How are the doors secured? What time do we have coverage on the band hallways and doorways and on the stages and steps?" And then it's meeting with people at those individual posts and going over what our desires are and how we want to lock it down. Then it's getting the passes issued to the venues so that everybody that's backstage has the right access.

Also, if we're going to bring 18,000 people into an arena, then we need to consider all of the elements: the number of entrances, the staff available to do the searches and whether we'll have a walk-through magnetometer, a pat down, a wand or a combination of all of the above. You have to ask, "What are the steps if someone walks through the magnetometer and it triggers? What is the secondary search procedure? What's the procedure if your RFID or your ticket-scanning system goes down?" Anything you can do ahead of time to be prepared for any of those potential issues just makes you better prepared to have a good night.

MIKE LOVE

The Beach Boys singer marks the 50th anniversary of his life-changing Maharishi Mahesh Yogi meeting with his long-awaited second solo album and another "endless summer" on the road with his iconic band.

By **MIKE GREENHAUS**

MIKE LOVE IS WELL aware of his reputation. As the only original member of The Beach Boys still touring under that name—and the outspoken alpha-yang to his cousin Brian Wilson's introspective-yin—the tall, tan, 77-year-old singer knows that he has come to personify the family-friendly showmanship that often eclipses the band's '60s artistic critical peak. But, as Love's never-ending summer tour with The Beach Boys nears its 60th year, he prefers to focus on those enduring harmonies.

"There's been a lot written about The Beach Boys and the imperfections that we all have on this lavatory of planet earth," Love says. "Too much has been made out of that kind of thing. I do everything I can to think positively and, in other words, regenerate and recreate good vibrations rather than negative ones. I leave it to other people to dissect who did what to whom because that misses the overarching, overruling positivity, happiness, comfort and joy that our music has given so many millions of people all over the world."

It's been 20 years since the band's longtime lynchpin Carl Wilson succumbed to cancer and the surviving original Beach Boys split into their own camps. With the exception of a high-profile 2012 anniversary run that reunited the band's classic members for a new album and tour, Love has been the sole founding member to tour under The Beach Boys name through a licensing agreement with the band's Brothers Records.

As he explains in his candid 2016 memoir *Good Vibrations*, his tours—which also include longtime core member Bruce Johnston—have helped the label stay afloat while bringing The Beach Boys' name to new generations, thanks to hit-filled shows in theaters, fairgrounds and casinos around the world. (In 2017, the group's

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CJ Rivera

THE RADIATORS

Welcome to the Monkey House BY DEAN BUDNICK

IN JANUARY, The Radiators made a surprise announcement: In conjunction with a three-night 40th anniversary stand at New Orleans' famed Tipitina's, the group revealed that they had recorded a new studio album. The news came as a shock to their legion of devoted Fishheads. Back in 2010, the veteran New Orleans ensemble—Dave Malone (guitar, vocals), Ed Volker (keys, vocals), Camile Baudoin (guitar), Frank Bua, Jr. (drums) and Reggie Scanlan (bass)—issued a statement indicating that they would cease performing. Although they have reunited for a few select appearances at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and at Tip's since that time, they have not released a studio album since 2006's *Dreaming Out Loud*.

"While the fans were surprised about the album, we were pretty taken aback, as well," Malone admits. "The Radiators officially called it quits because Ed Volker decided he'd had enough of being on the road. He'd just had enough of being in a rock band: He did not want to get on a plane, he did not want to get on a bus, he did not want to get on a train. He didn't want to go anywhere. I don't think he's left New Orleans. He also wanted to get back to just playing piano. He's one of those songwriters who writes every day and he wanted to focus on that. None of us could fault him for it. We weren't happy about it, but we had to honor his wishes."

The other four band members continued to cross paths and perform together in various incarnations, such as Raw Oyster Cult, in which Malone, Baudoin

and Bua teamed with Papa Grows Funk's John Gros and Dave Pomerleau of Johnny Sketch and the Dirty Notes. Meanwhile, Malone remained in contact with Volker in order to solicit new material.

"While I was getting together with Ed, looking for songs, we talked about being ashamed that we had not gone into the studio more and recorded because Ed is really prolific," Malone admits. "We had all these songs that we'd done onstage that had never been recorded in a studio and thought it would be cool to record them one day. I was waiting for Ed to give the go ahead, and he was finally ready."

So, in October, the quintet entered Jake Eckert's Rhythm Shack to work with Eckert and his New Orleans Suspects bandmate Jeff Watkins on what would become *Welcome to the Monkey House*. "We cut for just a couple days," Malone recalls. "It was very laid-back, very low key, no pressure. The studio was in a building in Jake's backyard, and we all know each other really well. We all got together and, as soon as we started playing, it became this familiar sound. If I bring together the greatest players out there and mix in a couple of Rads, it'll sound good. But if you get us five knuckleheads in a room together, all of a sudden, *boom*, it becomes this sound that only the five of us can make—like it or not, and I *do* like it."

WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE

Our fans are hardcore music fans who know *a lot* about all different kinds of music. At some point, we had this notion that, when we're there with this big family, a weird energy fills a room. "Welcome to the Monkey House" expresses that big family connection when it's us looking out at our fans and there's this mad energy in the room. I don't know for certain if that's how the song came to be, but it was a song that Ed wrote that I really liked and, somehow, monkeys became the theme of this album.

TIME TO RISE AND SHINE

Ed wrote this song after The Rads broke up, and I just really loved it, so I insisted we do it. It also was a chance for us to put vocal harmonies on a song, which was really cool and something The Rads aren't really known for.

BACK TO LOVELAND

Ed wrote this song a while back. We had played it on a few rare occasions and I always loved it, and he agreed that we should record it. That's the way we always did things. Ed is really prolific and, for half of the existence of The Rads—maybe longer—he and I got together to pick which songs we wanted to sing and then we brought them to The Radiators. The two of us did this more than anyone else because we were the two singers in the band.

I'm probably the guy on earth who has heard the largest percentage of Ed's songs. Originally, I would get cassette tapes and then, later, CDs of his demos. Sometimes it was just piano and vocals, and sometimes he would do percussion and keyboard overdubs and stuff. He's a really good percussion player.

We didn't let his arrangements influence how they became Rad songs, but he would decide which ones he thought were a good fit for The Radiators and wanted to sing. I would do the same thing with my songs or someone else's

Continued on page 84

THE WEIGHT BAND

By BRIAN ROBBINS

"YOU JUST KEEP THAT rhythm, Jimmy—lock in with the kick-drum and keep that rhythm nice and thick."

Those were Levon Helm's words to Jim Weider when he was handpicked to take on the guitar duties in The Band back in 1985, a few years after founding members Helm, Rick Danko, Garth Hudson and Richard Manuel reformed without guitarist Robbie Robertson.

Helm's's advice made perfect sense to Weider—that was the way he'd grown up playing music in Woodstock, N.Y.

"Being a guitar player around Woodstock in the '60s, you'd be backing up everybody from folk singers to rhythm-and-blues players," Weider says 33 years later, as his current Upstate New York outfit The Weight Band rolls out their debut LP, *World Gone Mad*.

"There's a certain sound that you hear on The Band's records: a mixture of New Orleans, folk, rockabilly. It's funky and loose—nothing's super polished. That Woodstock sound is the kind of music I've played all my life."

Weider soldiered on with The Band through their quiet last waltz after Rick Danko's untimely passing in 1999 and continued to divide his creative energy between his own projects and work with his former bandmates. And now, as the most visible direct connection to The Band still actively touring, Weider is bringing that same feel, that same groove and that same vibe to The Weight Band. The biggest hurdle that Weider and keyboardist/vocalist Brian Mitchell, keyboardist/saxophonist/vocalist Marty Grebb, bassist/vocalist Albert Rogers and drummer/vocalist Michael Bram have had to overcome is the misconception that they are exclusively a Band tribute act.

The project originated during a 2013 jam session at Helm's fabled barn dubbed "Songs of The Band." Organized by Weider and latter-day Band drummer Randy Ciarlante, the evening featured Hudson, Fab Faux guitarist and onetime Midnight Ramble staple Jimmy Vivino and Ollabelle bassist and regular Helm collaborator Byron Isaacs. The collaboration clicked from the start and captured the spirit of The Band at a time when fans were still reeling from Helm's 2012 passing. After a few additional tributes, Weider, Ciarlante and Isaacs decided to put together a more full-time project featuring some of the leading lights of the Catskill Mountain-birthed musical roots system.

And each member of the current Weight Band has a close tie to original group. Grebb played in bands that Danko and Hudson each led, wrote tunes with Manuel and contributed songs to The Band's 1993 album *Jericho*. Rogers—who replaced Isaacs, who now plays with The Lumineers, Lost Leaders and his own combo—performed with Hudson and Helm, and Mitchell was a member of Levon's Midnight Ramble Band for years.

Even The Weight Band's newest member, Bram, who joined after Ciarlante moved on, was raised on The Band and made music over the years with members of Helm's old group The Barnburners. If you dig into The Weight Band's respective résumés, then you'll find they've also jammed with a list that includes Willie Nelson, Leon Russell, Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, B.B. King, Al Green, Etta James, Albert Lee, Hubert Sumlin and Jason Mraz.

Though The Weight Band grew out of a tribute to Helm and his bandmates, with its newly released 11-track album *World Gone Mad*, the ensemble have firmly established themselves as an entity unto their own. They cut 10 of the LP's songs at The Clubhouse Studio in Rhinebeck, N.Y., and the album's final selection is from Daryl Hall's Daryl's House club in Pawling, N.Y. Weider's main weapon of choice for the driving title song is a mandolin, rather than his faithful Telecaster, but he plays the little beast with an ear-catching fierceness while sharing his views on the current state of the world's affairs with his lead vocal. Grebb's voice, especially on "Fire in the Hole" and "Heat of the Moment," recalls Manuel's sweet falsetto.

Weider remembers going into the studio with The Band back when he first joined to record a version of "I Wish You Were Here Tonight" that featured the delicate singer and Band multi-instrumentalist who hung himself in 1986, shortly into Weider's tenure in The Band .

"I loved that song, but it never got released," says Weider. He resurrected it for the *World Gone Mad* sessions, with Rogers taking the lead on the verses and Bram coming in on the choruses. The song also features a lovely passage where Mitchell's accordion gently passes the torch to Weider's guitar before Grebb's sax takes over.

The Weight Band also turn the Hunter/Garcia-penned classic "Deal" on its head, opening the track with a funkified guitar riff before the song settles into a raucous, rootsy groove with Mitchell's bluesy growl nailing the proper attitude for the tune. (Jackie Greene lends a hand, singing lead on a verse and adding some slide guitar to the track.) "Big Legged Sadie" (which is chock-full of hip-grinds and R. Crumbish characters) sounds like a Grateful Dead rarity but is actually an original cooked up by Weider and Grebb; "Common Man" and "Never Too Old (to Rock n Roll)" were *Jericho*-era buried treasures the group unearthed for the sessions. "Every Step of the Way" is a crash-course in Woodstock soul; and "Day of the Locusts" might be one from Mr. Dylan's catalog, but by the time Bram's done singing, he owns it.

"Remedy" is the perfect album closer—a tasty sampler of what The Weight Band sounds like in a live setting. Rogers and Bram lock in, allowing their bandmates to roll and tumble with wildly spiraling keyboards and feisty Tele work from Weider.

"We're itching to get out there and play these new tunes," Weider says. "We want people to hear what this group can do."

Ru Lomer

STEVEN WILSON

By RYAN REED

STEVEN WILSON WASN'T aiming to alienate close-minded fans—namely, progressive rock purists—with his fifth LP, last year's *To the Bone*. But he won't deny being delighted by their dissent, a happy byproduct of doing whatever the fuck he wants as a songwriter. "That's what happens when you're the kind of artist who likes to reinvent himself," he says.

Wilson came along at the perfect time to be crowned a prog-rock god. Born in 1967, he released his first album with Porcupine Tree in 1992, more than a decade after the genre had faded from commercial and critical favor. And his résumé backs up the title. He's created some of the most imaginative, expertly performed rock music of the past 25 years—both as a solo artist and Porcupine Tree's bandleader—and he's recently carried the prog torch in a more literal fashion by remixing classic albums from bands like King Crimson, Yes and Jethro Tull.

But the point remains: He doesn't want to be the poster boy of any movement or revival. In his less famous projects, he's ventured into post-rock and ambience (No-Man), art-rock (Blackfield), and experimental drone (Bass Communion). And with *To The Bone*, he channeled untapped influences in an attempt to show even more range—and to occupy a gaping hole in pop music.

"We've lost David Bowie and Prince, who are the equivalent of each other in the '70s and '80s," he says. "They essentially occupy part of what I call the 'creative mainstream.' They are pop stars with No. 1 albums and singles; everyone knows their songs, but their music is quite experimental. In 2016, I spent a lot of time going back and listening to those two artists. There's the very mainstream pop industry these days, and you have fantastic music happening in the underground. But you don't have that middle ground where Bowie and Prince once reigned supreme, along with bands like The Police, Talking Heads, Depeche Mode. These artists would sometimes deal with quite dark subject matters, and the music would be quite experimental, but they were creating pop songs and trying to reach a mainstream audience. I miss that, and I think if I had a mission, then it is trying to bring back that progressive approach to creating pop music."

The fan reaction has been fascinating. *To the Bone* shot to the top three on the U.K. charts (with a more modest placement in the U.S.), but some diehards immediately cried foul about the falsetto-laced, Abba-meets-ELO single "Permanating" and the sleek balladry of vocal showcase "Pariah."

"If you're not upsetting at least some of your fan base or creating some kind of discussion and dissension, you're probably not doing the right thing," he reflects. "The problem comes when people decide that you exist within a particular genre. Some have decided I belong in this box and shouldn't get out. To be honest, I take great delight in upsetting them because I think they need to be upset. In my travels, I meet people who believe that all the greatest music was made between 1970–1974 by about five bands, and you have to continue to pay homage to that; otherwise, you're doing something wrong. I have those people in my audience every night—I know they're there. They like a lot of what I do, which is great. But they don't obviously like it when I do something that doesn't fit into that very narrow definition. I'm pleased in a way. That's the best indicator that I've evolved."

Lasse Hoile

As a more extreme example of fan frustration, he points to his friend Mikael Åkerfeldt, singer/guitarist of Swedish prog-metal act Opeth. "Mikael had death threats!" he says. "He had people say they were going to kill him. You really need to get some therapy at that point. There's plenty of other music out there."

Nonetheless, Wilson's audience keeps showing up—both the loyal (and possibly irritated) die-hards, and maybe even some newbies that came onboard with *To the Bone*. And his schedule is only getting busier: He's currently in the middle of a massive world tour, and he makes time to squeeze in work on remix projects during his downtime between gigs using a portable rig. "It's a great way to make constructive use of a lot of time I have backstage, in dressing rooms, in hotels," he says. "Otherwise, I'd be twiddling my thumbs."

He's already plotting another creative shift, having written three songs for his next LP. "The first thing I do is figure out what kind of musical world this new album is going to inhabit," he says. "It's difficult for me to articulate. I can't easily say what it is, but it's different again and quite fresh. I can say it's going to be focused on songs but with slightly more experimental production techniques and, production-wise, a little less rock. Sonically, I think it will be a lot more strange and experimental, but still allied to this idea of songwriting and melody."

The irony is obvious: As much as Wilson feels uncomfortable with the "progressive" label, his music defines the concept at its core. "The clue is in the title of the genre: 'progressive,'" he says. "You're supposed to do something different with it, aren't you?"

RELIX DIGITAL SAMPLER

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1 EGi

"Fresh"
From the album *Vessel*
Self-released

EGi focuses on eloquent songwriting alongside intense instrumental compositions while leaving space for epic improvisational journeys. A staple of EGi has always been the dual lead guitar sound, complimenting each other through an understood recognition of space and harmony. The rhythm section provides a driving backbone while keeping the pocket deep and funky.

egimusic.com

2 Steve Hester

"Waterside (Outlaw Edition)"
From the album *Steve Hester and DeJaVooDoo*
Swamp Stomp Records

Steve Hester is a high energy, Outlaw Country/Southern/Blues Rock artist doing originals and original style covers. The band has performed with B.B. King, Eric Gales, Chris Duarte, Johnny Winter, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Devon Allman, to name a few!

artistecard.com/stevehester

3 Kevin Kinsella

"Train is Not Coming"
Single
I Town Records

Kevin Kinsella's distinctive voice and writing style have made him an icon of American reggae for over twenty-five years. Founding member of such bands as The Tribulations, John Brown's Body, and 10 FT Ganja Plant, Kinsella is internationally recognized for the spirit he brings.

kevinkinsellamusic.com

4 Zoofunkyou

"Shapes"
Single
Self-Released

"A psychedelic stew, featuring a Chicago based bluesy broth, sizzlin' with soul, chunks of funk, and meaningful melodic lyrics. Reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix, The Grateful Dead, Alabama Shakes, and Funkadelic, the electric jams of Zoofunkyou are guaranteed to tickle the soul, melt the face, and shake the booty!"

zoofunkyou.com

5 Travis Shallow & The Deep End

"The Great Divide"
From the album *The Great Divide*
Self-released

Emerging from NC, Travis Shallow & The Deep End dive into *The Great Divide* with their eyes wide open. Their debut release seamlessly weaves genres, adding a touch of surprise, yet staying hauntingly familiar. Shallow is a musician's musician, and his new release, *The Great Divide*, is your window in.

travisshallow.com

6 Kessel Run

"Tactic"
From the album *Kessel Run Live at the Fox Theatre*
Self-Released

Kessel Run is a progressive funk band based in Denver, CO. Fusing elements of rock, jazz, and prog over pulse-pounding funk, they deliver a high-energy concert experience that has something for everyone. Catch this young quintet live as they headline the Fox Theatre in Boulder, CO on Friday, June 29th.

kesselrunmusic.com

7 Steepland String Band

"Lady Luck"
From the album *Pie*
Self-released

Steepland is a fast-driving acoustic quartet that explores a wide variety of genres, while managing to stay rooted in bluegrass tradition. Performing covers that span from Willie Nelson to Ween, as well as improvisational original material, they manage to give fans a unique experience that keeps them coming back for more.

steeplandstringband.com

8 Tilted Shadows

"On the Edge"
From the album *Nothing Ventured*
Sonic Dumpster Music

Tilted Shadows is a rock band from the Pittsburgh PA area that fuses melodic rock, grunge and various alt rock influences. Originally formed in 2015, they're currently working on the follow up to their debut album, *Nothing Ventured*, and are known for passionate performances while playing both electric and unplugged sets.

tiltedshadows.com

9 Catdaddy's Funky Fuzz-Bunker Band

"Good Lovin'"
Single
CATDADJAMS

Catdaddy's Funky Fuzz-Bunker Band started in Columbia Missouri in June 2014. With their love for live improvisation, Catdaddy crafts new sounds while keeping things funky and fresh. Catdaddy has opened for Twiddle, Mungion and Aqueous. Their mission is to keep the spirit of jams alive in all of us!

facebook.com/catdadjams

10 Jay Vonn

"#99"
From the album *A Song for the Morning*
Jay Vonn Music

Jay Vonn is an Americana/Folk musician from Illinois who wanders the country in a Chevy van with his dog. A writer of songs since he knew how to talk, he has played clubs and festivals all over the Midwest and beyond. Coming soon to a town near you!

jayvonn.com

11 Don Matta

"Contigo"
From the album *Desde Mi Ventana*
Black Water Sound Records

Created in 2006 by Pedro Zanoguera and Bryan Almeida for fun amongst friends, songs were derived from jokes between members that ended up evolving into actual songs. Auditions brought upon the drummer Michael Romero, thus forging the passionate Don Matta.

blackwatersoundrecords.com

12 HIPGNOSTIC

"Ape in Me"
From the album *Precognition*
Self-Released

A dynamic rhythm section supporting the whims of twin frontmen: cosmic-fire MC, BearCat Kringle, and gnarled prophet singer-guitarist, Boss Jones. As esoteric as that sounds, the five-piece churns out songs as catchy as its leaders are eccentric. The experience is tight, hypnotic, and distinctively Charlotte.

hipgnosticband.com

13 Secret City Band

"World's Gone Crazy"
From the album *Secret City*
Self-released

Secret City Band are an original three-piece creative rock band from Denver, Colorado. The group consists of three seasoned players: Nick Melliadis (lead vocals, guitar), Steve Faulkner (drums, harmony) and Nate Baker (bass). The genre of rock may change; however, the distinctive style of Secret City Band remains true and pure.

secretcityband.com

14 WicoSanii

"Take Me As I Am"
From the album *Take Me As I Am*
Self-Released

The original version of "Take me as I am" refers more to family members & friends who were false, talked behind my back, etc...but it is also about learning & growing. I am always writing 'bout my experiences in my life. And all these are the reasons, that I am what I am today.

reverbnation.com/wicosanii

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WOMAN AT WORK

NATALIE PRASS

Odes to Inner Strength

"I CAN'T BELIEVE the things I hear," Richmond, Va.-based songwriter Natalie Prass sings over some seriously pumping bass on "Oh My," the invocation of her sophomore album, *The Future and the Past*. It may be a statement of confusion about the tumultuous state of the country, but the record is a decisive move on Prass' part.

Her 2015 self-titled debut—a sepia-toned *Tapestry*-meets-Van Dyke Parks fantasia—was hailed as a breakout by critics. But while the new album doesn't jettison any of her tunefulness or classically minded songcraft, it steps forward boldly with a jazzier, funkier strut. If *Natalie Prass* had a tendency to induce the feeling of floating, then *The Future and the Past* is designed for on-the-ground swaying. Conceived with longtime collaborator Matthew E. White and the Spacebomb production crew, the record drips with lush gospel vocals, clipped guitar lines, g-funk synths and deep grooves—equal parts *Rhythm Nation* and local classic *Voodoo*. (D'Angelo, Prass notes, is a fellow Richmond native and her Virginia community also includes her boyfriend and collaborator, Dr. Dog drummer Erik Slick.)

It was a different record than Prass planned to make before the 2016 presidential election waylaid her completely.

"I couldn't move for like a month," she says, detailing weeks spent under blankets, crying at the news.

After she'd properly convalesced, she found the material she'd amassed for the new record, centered on a bad breakup, entirely lacking in emotional resonance.

"I went to Matt and said, 'I can't record this record,'" Prass says. "I said, 'All I care about now is our country and how fucked up this is.' I would never forgive myself if I didn't contribute to the conversation."

White agreed, and the duo spent a month talking, with Prass sharing her experiences in the Richmond and Nashville music scenes. The conversations led to songs focused on womanhood, resilience and honesty.

"We wrote every single day," Prass says. Over time, they put together the bulk of a new LP. The fresh material leaned harder into the sonic traditions of the music that Prass had found herself constantly streaming on Spotify—disco, funk, '80s and '90s R&B—and the gospel CDs that she picked up at a local record store.

As a result, *The Future and the Past* is a type of protest record. But the songwriter acknowledges that it's not a typical one. On songs like the pop standout "Short Court Style," Prass utilizes the language of romantic acceptance to draw together themes of togetherness. "Oh, the heart is pumping rhythms that are not our own/ Oh, but for all," she sings, soaring over clipped guitars and synths. Balancing joyfulness with concern and fear with celebration, Prass has crafted an album of odes to inner strength.

"It's scary no matter what kind of record you make," she says. "But this is not the time for me to be scared."

Jason P. Woodbury

GROUP AT WORK

MAGIC IN THE OTHER

Collectively Transformed

"I VIEW MAGIC IN THE Other as a dance band, but one that touches on different emotional centers," Ezra Lipp, the group's founder/drummer/songwriter, explains. "Music can relate to people in four general areas—the head, the heart, the body and the soul. That's just as true of the Grateful Dead, James Brown and The Beatles, as it is of jazz music or classical Indian music. You can have this transcendent real-time experience, where the audience shapes the music, the music shapes the audience and everyone is collectively transformed."

These are lofty ambitions, but Lipp doesn't shy away from them when defining the ethos of the trio that he assembled in 2017, along with bass player Steve Adams (ALO, Nicki Bluhm & The Gramblers) and guitarist Roger Riedlbauer (Jolie Holland, Mercury Falls). The project had been a long time coming for Lipp, a New England transplant who arrived in the Bay Area just over a decade ago. As Lipp established himself on the West Coast, he started receiving invitations to perform with an expanding range of artists, including Phil Lesh, Huckle and Sean Hayes. Andrew Barr even invited Lipp to sub for him during a few Surprise Me Mr. Davis gigs. (It was a particularly meaningful request since he had been fan of Barr's band, The Slip, since his high school days).

Over the past few years, Lipp began wondering whether an opportunity might arise for him to move beyond the role of a sideman. "I even wrote this song called 'Man Without a Band,' which is on an album that Terrapin Crossroads put out called *Buckle Up Kids, Vol. 1*," he recalls. "It's a sad but funny song about yearning to be the main, driving, imaginative force of a project."

Lipp finally made the leap in early 2017, drawing in Adams and Riedlbauer, both of whom he had played with on occasion, but hadn't met each other. "Roger is a killer guitar player who lives in Oakland," Adams offers. "He's more in the jazz world than the Dead world—both of those worlds exist in the Bay Area, but sometimes they don't collide as much as you might think. He's like Bill Frisell with a punk-jazz, avant-garde approach."

Lipp's compositions initially focused on the instrumental side and balanced cerebral, jazz-influenced offerings with more groove-infused expressions—not altogether dissimilar to the early work of The Slip. Increasingly, he's been writing material with lyrics, aspiring to connect with listeners on another level. This blend will appear on the band's debut record, which will be released later this year, thanks to a successful Kickstarter campaign.

As for the future, Lipp is wistful about the various ways that Magic In The Other can flourish: "There's a thing that certain bands can do—like The Slip or Phish or the Grateful Dead—that's about developing a relationship with the audience and a relationship with each other, and letting the music grow over time. A certain amount of creativity and imagination goes into that, which allows everything to evolve and deepen." ***Dean Budnick***

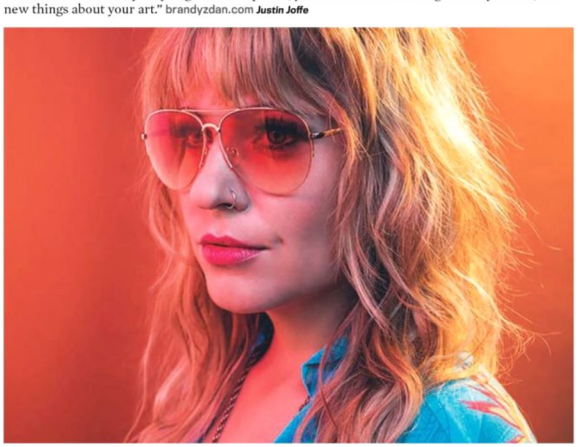
Tonje Thilesen (Prass); Andrew Quist (Magic)

5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

BRANDY ZDAN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

The Other Side of Sadness

Brandy Zdan's musical roadmap starts at home in Winnipeg, continues through her near-decade in the critically revered Canadian gothic-folk outfit Twilight Hotel and culminates with her sophomore solo album, *Secretear*. For this most recent release, the now Nashville-based guitarist/keyboardist found a true band of true collaborators—My Morning Jacket's Tom Blankenship and Carl Broeml on bass and guitar/pedal steel, returning producer and surrogate brother Teddy Morgan on secondary guitars, and Zdan's husband/co-writer Aaron Haynes, whom she met about six months before the recording process commenced, on drums. *Secretear*'s riff-laden burners and mindful pop ballads shine with emotional resolve and permanence. The Nashville music scene also helped her think differently about collaboration. "I get called in to do backup vocals on a lot of people's records and on demos, and then I also co-write with people," she says. "It's diverse, so if you can get around that stuff, play on a couple people's records here and there and take a pick-up gig, then you can make it happen." *Secretear*'s a record about love, sure—the track "I Want Your Trouble" takes its title directly from something Haynes said to Zdan while they were dating—but it's also a record about going to your absolute emotional breaking point in order to come out on the other side, stronger than ever. "I went to a place that I hadn't gone before, where I couldn't even form a chord while tracking a song and my voice was blown out," she says. "You need death for rebirth in creativity—if you go to those places, you'll discover new things about yourself, and new things about your art." brandyzdan.com ***Justin Joffe***



THE SHACKS NEW YORK

Whispery Dream Music

If the glaring blur of 21st-century living makes you seek solace in a sonic cocoon, then **The Shacks** create music that swaddles the listener in a nostalgic amniotic sound bath—equal parts sleepy and groovy. The band's aptly titled debut album, *Haze*, is a swirl of soft pop, girl-group shimmer, chamber soul and mellow baroque psychedelia. "We feel somewhat out of place in the generation we were born in," says guitarist/producer **Max Shrager**, who founded The Shacks with singer/bassist **Shannon Wise**. "We all like old music and old technology. We like old stuff." Though they are still in their twenties, the self-proclaimed "studio rats" spent years burrowing among vintage keyboards and analog tape decks, and *Haze* is a gauzy kaleidoscope of an album. Wise sings with a breathy near-whisper that gets paired with gentle guitar lines, flutes, strings and retro organ sounds. Shrager played guitar in Charles Bradley's band, and he's worked closely with the sound architects at Daptone Records, learning how to create a contemporary sound that harkens back to classic recordings from half a century ago. In this case, the sound of The Shacks might summon comparisons to cult favorites like The Free Design or Margo Guryan. Imagine Astrud Gilberto fronting a late-night session with The Beach Boys; The Shacks are coming from a place like that. The hushed vibe isn't just a mellow musical metabolism. It's counterintuitive, but low-volume takes can give the final product a wider dynamic range. "If you start out quieter, you can not only get the subtleties, but it breathes through, and it comes through bigger," says Shrager. His point makes sense, sonically. Wise's whisper-singing yields a whole spectrum of color and expression. The ear zooms in on the details in a sonic high-def that's almost psychedelic in its granular clarity. The songs themselves, like the title track, "Birds," "Sleeping" and "Let Your Love," suggest a drowsy idyll of beds and murmurs, a place where you might go to escape the world. For Shrager and Wise, the process of writing and recording mirrors the values expressed in the music. "There's definitely the element of retreat in creating your own little world," says Shrager. shacksband.com ***John Adamian***

Sesse Lind (The Shacks), Alysse Gafkjen (ZDan)

THE TESKEY BROTHERS MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

American Roots Down Under

Melbourne may not be synonymous with Motown or Memphis, but the capital city is Australia's home for the blues, soul and **The Teskey Brothers**. Siblings and frontmen **Josh** and **Sam Teskey** formed the quartet—which also features bassist **Brendon Love** and drummer **Liam Gough**—as teens just over a decade ago. Last year, they self-released their shining debut, *Half Mile Harvest*, introducing the rest of the world to the band's ear-turning brand of vintage R&B. A first visit to the U.S. came in late fall of 2017, followed by a short 2018 spring run stateside, including a buzz-worthy SXSW appearance and West Coast dates opening for Los Lobos. Despite their classic influences, singer/guitarist Josh Teskey credits a very modern platform—a set of Spotify playlists—for spreading their music to the U.S. and U.K. And, while the album is quick to draw favorable comparisons to titans such as Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett, hometown stars such as Chris Wilson and Geoff Achison opened the gates. "We are this Australian representation of what other Australians were doing with American blues and soul," says Josh. "Maybe that's our slightly interesting touch." Born to English parents, the Teskeys, too, were reared on the British blues of The Rolling Stones and Joe Cocker and the psychedelic swirls of Peter Green-era Fleetwood Mac and Pink Floyd. The love for their influences extended to the studio, where a vintage 24-track, 1970s tape machine captured mostly first takes of their road-tested original repertoire. The Teskey Brothers will return to America in July, and while they've become a continental success touring Australia and New Zealand, the foursome is eager for more experiences in the U.S. "We love coming here," Josh says. "To travel, have a really good time and see how it goes down." theteskeybrothers.com ***Larson Sutton***

BELLE ADAIR MUSCLE SHOALS, ALA.

Claim to FAME

For **Matthew Green**, Muscle Shoals is more than a hotbed of iconic rock-and-roll, it's also his home. As the lead singer and principal songwriter of swirling, jangle-rock outfit **Belle Adair**, Green knew that he wanted to record his second LP at Muscle Shoals' legendary FAME Studios. Using the studio's vintage microphones, Wurlitzers and B-3 organs, *Tuscumbia* pivots away from the singer-songwriter energy of the band's first output, *The Brave and the Blue*, to create a more collective sound. "With the second record, there was much more of a focus on the strengths of the guys in the band and what we do best," he says. "I also consciously wanted to get back to what I loved growing up. Pretty, sugary pop tunes and a real specific sort of thing: Big Star, Teenage Fanclub, The Byrds." With the support of his tight-knit label Single Lock Records, Green enlisted frequent Wilco collaborator Tom Schick to produce and mix *Tuscumbia*, using techniques like layered vocals to add a cohesiveness to its sound. "It takes a certain amount of alchemy," Green explains. "Something weird where all the people come together and it just clicks. I think our Single Lock family probably feels similar to what went on [at FAME] back in the '50s and '60s." In turn, *Tuscumbia* emerges as an indie record with retro-rock flair. And while FAME is often remembered for the famous faces that walked its halls (Duane Allman, Aretha Franklin and Etta James to name a few), Green looks to the studio's local talent as a model for success. "I look up to the studio musicians in a lot of ways because they were able to make records on their own terms in a small town. They didn't have to go to LA, New York, Nashville or wherever. It's really inspiring. Hopefully we can do the same thing." belleadairmusic.com ***Raffaela Kenny-Cincotta***

Abraham Rowe (Belle Adair)

CHARLIE FAYE AND THE FAYETTES AUSTIN, TEXAS

'60s Girl-Group Music for Today

When **Charlie Faye** couldn't do the sad singer-songwriter act any longer, she decided to do a 180 and channel the music that brought her the most joy—the records from Stax and Motown. The result is **Charlie Faye and the Fayettes**, a '60s-style girl group with Faye as the lead and **Akina Adderley** and **BettySoo** supplying background vocals. "Writing in my twenties was all about self-expression in my darkest moments," she says. "It felt great to write, but it could be depressing to listen to." Originally from New York City, Faye moved to Austin over a decade ago where she first met BettySoo and conceived of the project. Soon after, Faye's Facebook post about the basic tracking in the studio caught Adderley's attention, and she reached out to express her interest in collaborating. "We had her come over one day, the three of us tried singing together and it was just a perfect fit," says Faye. "They're both incredible artists in their own right, in addition to being the best harmony/background singers I've ever met. It's not lost on me how lucky I am to get to work with both of them." Their first album, the 2016 *Charlie Faye & the Fayettes*, was their ticket into that year's SXSW, and they're currently working on a new album with returning co-writers Bill Demain and Faye's husband/bassist **Eric Holden** as well as the backing band of Holden, **Pete Thomas** (drums), **Marcus Watkins** (guitar) and **Chris Joyner** (keyboards). "The response to the band has been overwhelmingly positive," says Faye. "And I really believe it's because we're singing songs that make people feel good." With their retro outfits and old-school harmonies, the trio knows that it would only take a few Motown cover songs for them to lose their artistic credibility and turn into a gimmick. "A big part of what makes this project cool is the writing of new songs in this style," says Faye. "I like to include more modern themes in our songs so that they're relevant and meaningful to people right now. Social change and love aren't new themes—they were certainly around in the '60s in full force! But I try to write about them in a way that will resonate with people today." ***Sonia Weiser***

JINGLE ALL THE WAY

of Montreal's gender-bending guiding light defends his controversial decision to make it OK to dance to the phrase "Let's Go Outback Tonight"

By **KEVIN BARNES**

MANY YEARS AGO, I was approached by an advertising company to use the melody of one of my songs, "Wraith Pinned to the Mist, and Other Games," as a jingle for one of their clients. The client, as it turned out, was Outback Steakhouse. When they initially reached out, I thought it was a joke because it seemed so far-fetched that a company like that would ever want to be associated with my band. When I think about Outback Steakhouse, I think of sweaty meats and pickup trucks with Confederate flag bumper stickers, not gender-bending or cross-dressing or queer pride.

A lot of people have asked me why/how I could have ever given them permission to use my song, so I'd like to walk you through the process. The way it unfolded was very surreal: They told me that the client only wanted to use the vibe of the song and that I didn't have to do anything personally other than give them approval for their people to create something reminiscent of my song. They told me it would most likely only be used on radio and likely only for a few months. At the time, I didn't have any legal representation or council, and I was just the lead singer of an indie band struggling to keep my small family afloat.

I had never done any corporate events, I had never been on television and I had no connection, whatsoever, to big business or corporate America. I viewed myself as an underground, independent artist, completely free from the mainstream. I felt like I lived in a parallel universe outside of the machinations of big-money capitalism. I made albums in my bedroom and I performed them with my close friends, and everything was always DIY. There wasn't a lot of money in it but we were fulfilled by the process and received enough affirmation from the outside world to continue on.

Around the time the ad agency contacted me, my daughter was about one year old and I was feeling a lot of anxiety about balancing the *want* of chasing my dream with the *need* to support my child. So, when the agency seductively waved the check in my face, I couldn't resist. It's one thing to be a starving artist when you only have yourself to take care of, but when you're trying to raise an infant, you can't really be so idealistic about where your money is coming from, right? That's not to say that I *only* spent the money on my daughter; I also bought some S&M gear and some Kenneth Anger DVDs and stuff, but most of the money went toward diapers and formula.

Fast-forward a few months, and you'll find me dealing with a small furor over the ad and, for the first time in my life, being called a sellout. It was such a crazy feeling to be the target of so much rancor and to be treated like an art-rock Judas. I had gone from being a precious little indie darling to a bit of a pariah in just a matter of months, and it didn't feel good. It all seems pretty silly now but, at the time, it felt serious and deeply upsetting. People came to shows with Outback Steakhouse menus and signs and mocked us from the audience. I felt like a worse-dressed Dylan going electric. *Ha!*

In hindsight, I can see how the scandal was kind of beneficial to me as an artist, though, because it made me want to prove myself even more and led me to do things that I might not have done otherwise, like stripping naked during one of our shows or riding a horse onstage or making a really bonkers album like *Skeletal Lamping*. I used the negative feels as a motivation to try to show the world how little of a sellout I was, although, on some level, I can see now that I was sort of chasing my tail.

It is also interesting how allowing one of my songs to be turned into a jingle has become a fairly substantial footnote in my career. I still get asked about it in interviews, and I imagine that more people have heard the jingle version of that song than any of my other songs combined. That realization was simply hard to accept. The ad went through some weird permutations, but it was the primary Outback Steakhouse commercial jingle for about three years and it sort of haunted me for awhile.

I still get a funny feeling when we play that song. On occasion, I have actually slipped in the "let's go Outback tonight, the world will still be there tomorrow" lyric because I think it's a pretty bizarre and interesting concept. Why do they feel the need to tell their customers: "Don't worry, if you go to Outback Steakhouse tonight, the world will still be there tomorrow?" You don't see Taco Bell feeling like they have to reassure their customers of the obvious in that way, although the line "let's eat a Cheesy Gordita Crunch Combo, it won't give the oceans herpes" would make a pretty sweet jingle.

Kevin Barnes is of Montreal's founder, frontman and driving creative force, as well as a longtime member of the Elephant 6 Recording Company. He released of Montreal's 15th studio album, White Is Relic/Irrealis Mood, *in March via Polyvinyl Recording Co.*

Ebru Yildiz

THE REVIVALISTS

Frontman David Shaw waxes poetic on jam scene camaraderie, the civic benefits of festivals and a fortuitous game of ping-pong with Ellen.

By **MIKE GREENHAUS**

UNDERDOG ENERGY

Coming up through the festival world during the past few years, we've been something of the underdogs on the road among all of our musical heroes, and the title of our last record [2015's *Men Amongst Mountains*] speaks to that. We actually like being the underdogs; there's a nice energy that goes along with it, getting rooted for as the new guys on the block coming onto the scene. "Men Amongst Mountains" was birthed out of that spirit. We wrote that song in Colorado and it was cool to have that Colorado vibe running through it.

All of the bigger marquee acts have always been really nice; there's a lot of camaraderie on the scene. We're always down with a sit-in—there's this sense of danger that it can fall apart that creates this incredible energy. Warren Haynes came and played with us at our Jazz Fest late-night show, and we did "Gimme Shelter," which is among my favorite sit-ins ever. Warren's not just an amazing musician but also an amazing soul. I also always love it when Brandon Niederauer [Taz] joins us, and there was the time when Robert Randolph jammed with us in Indianapolis, which may be my favorite sit-in.

JAM-NATION AMBASSADORS

We all come from very different places musically—I come from a straight rock-and-roll background—and ended up in the jamband scene organically. We were always about the *song*, but when we first started playing as a band, to make ends meet, we would play these marathon shows for four or five hours. We only had 10 songs so we thought, "How long can we stretch this thing?" New Orleans has always been our home so we want to continue to spread that culture—I look at people like Preservation Hall's Ben Jaffe, who acts as a musical ambassador for the city and has brought in people like Arcade Fire. We also never had a stock rock lineup, and I think we are introducing something different to people who might not necessarily be familiar with our instrumentation. At least a few times a year someone will say to me: "Man, that guy really kills it on the keyboard," and I'll say, "It's a pedal steel, but thank you for the compliment." So I'm super grateful for the jam community—those fans know all our musical idiosyncrasies and come back night after night.

"AW, SNAP"

I realized something was going on when Ellen DeGeneres' people called our people and said, "Ellen heard the band and wants them on the show." We'd actually been reaching out to her camp for a while because she's an awesome person; she does so many amazing things for the world, not to mention she's funny as hell. She's from New Orleans and, while we were shooting the shit, playing ping-pong, it came out that we're from New Orleans, too. She's like, "We're gonna be friends forever." That was one of those moments where it was like, "We're *here* now." [The Revivalists' 2016 crossover single "Wish I Knew You"—which was produced by Galactic's Ben Ellman—eventually topped the Billboard Adult Alternative Songs chart and set a record, since surpassed by Portugal. The Man, for most plays during a week's time for any alternative/modern rock song.]

HOME IS WHERE YOUR FESTIVAL IS

I grew up in Hamilton, Ohio and always felt there was a lot of potential there; something just needed to get the embers burning a bit. Look at a place like Asheville, N.C. It's a beautiful city in the mountains, but what really makes that place so cool is that it has music flowing through its veins. I started the Big River Get Down because I thought Hamilton could be this pretty, hippie mountain town and it's starting to happen; they are writing articles in the *The Cincinnati Inquirer* about Hamilton being the next up-and-coming city in Ohio. Music has this way of bringing everybody together—5-10 years ago people used to say, "Oh, I'm from Hamilton." But now they say, "I'm from *Hamilton*." And it's really a change that comes from the people; it can't really come from anywhere else. That's what makes people wanna stay and not move to a bigger city when they're 17, 18. It's about having pride about where you come from.

THAT TRANSCENDENT PLACE

We are working with Dave Cobb on our next album. He's just an amazing producer who captures that live feel. He knows what to do with the song; he's that guy who knows how to pick out a hook and squeeze the best juice out of what you have. That's what a great producer does—they take the thing that you give them and they elevate it. We've started to play a couple of new songs live, but we aren't going to play too many before we release the album.

There's been times when we've written songs and, when we started playing them live, we've felt, "That's cool but it didn't take us to that transcendent place." Even if it is a song we haven't played for a while, sometimes we feel like, "This one is better on the album." It's not a conscious thing when we write a song, but some cuts are just better live, and some are better on the album.

We used to play all our songs as soon as we wrote them, but we would never have anything new left when the album was finally released. Now it's a bit maddening that we have to wait to play all these new songs when we have been playing the same songs for 10 years. But we are going to unbound them when the album comes out. Ⓡ

KEYS N KRATES

THE MEMBERS OF KEYS N KRATES ARE currently hanging out in Toronto between tour dates, working on a remix. Drummer Adam Tune, turntablist Greg "Jr. Flo" Dawson and keyboardist David Matisse each take a crack at the track individually and then come together to fuse their ideas as a team. The trio applied that same egalitarianism to their debut album *Cura*, which marks a serious departure in sound for the group. After a decade of making electronic-infused hip-hop, Keys N Krates wanted to step away from the hyped-up world of EDM and refine their sample-driven output. "All three of us were looking for a hard reset on our music, trying to pull it in a direction that we're all super excited about," Dawson says. "We kept coming back to using organic sounds and processing them, making them sound like samples and then flipping them in different ways."

Keys N Krates also reconsidered their presence onstage, and decided to redesign their light rig entirely. "Everyone's taking big LED screens with graphics [on the road], but we wanted to get away from that and go with more of a stripped-down light show," Tune adds. Before their U.S. tour, they spent a week in Nashville with lighting designer/director Ben Dalgleish "keying the lights to match the flow and the mood of each song," elevating both the "music and the visual aspect" of the trio. "We changed the feel of our show to be way more of a concert than a DJ set, and it was pleasantly surprising that people were feeling that," Dawson says. "We want our show to feel like a dynamic experience."

Our fans are the best—couldn't do this without all of their support.

(DAVID MATISSE)

Chicago is always fire! One of our favorite cities to play.

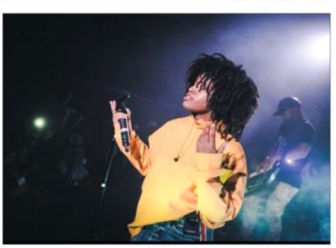
(MATISSE)

Just a bit of snow in Aspen, Colo.

(ADAM TUNE)

Pre-show literature.

(JR. FLO)



The amazing Ambre Perkins came out to our LA show to perform "Glitter" with us. She's the dopest.

(JR. FLO)

FaceTime chat with [Australian DJ/singer/producer] Anna Lunoe. Not sure why I look so confused.

(MATISSE)

BILL FRISELL

Having relocated back to New York after years in the Pacific Northwest, the legendary guitarist continues to push the boundaries between, jazz, Americana and rock in his own silent way. By JEFF TAMARKIN

BILL FRISELL'S NEW solo album for OKeh Records is called *Music IS*. The title came to him via a banjo-playing friend. "One day, he was just playing and he said, 'You know, music is good,'" Frisell recalls.

The idea stuck. But now, after being asked if he really feels that way, Frisell is having second thoughts. "One time, I was playing with [the late jazz drummer] Paul Motian in Berlin at this little club. We walked off stage and this guy grabbed me and started strangling me. He said, 'You are killing music!' He was physically attacking me because whatever I was playing was disturbing him so much. See, now you're ruining my whole theory that music is good."

Frisell laughs but, truly, he's got nothing to worry about. Over the course of more than three decades, the quality of music he has created has been uniformly stellar, even as he continually dodges categorization. Frisell has long carved out a place deep within the Downtown New York City avant-garde but has also recorded tributes to John Lennon and film soundtrack music. In 1999, Frisell teamed up with Elvis Costello for *The Sweetest Punch*—comprised almost completely of tunes that Costello wrote with Burt Bacharach—while he put his signature spin on hits from The Byrds, The Beach Boys, Link Wray and Merle Travis, among others, on 2014's *Guitar in the Space Age!*

Maintaining a schedule that makes a mockery of the word "prolific," and surprising even himself with his career choices, Frisell has recorded and performed live in so

many different situations and configurations that it would take an entire issue of this magazine to even scratch the surface. He's most often characterized as a jazz guitarist—he collaborated frequently with Motian and saxophonist Joe Lovano, as well as John Zorn, Ron Carter, Charles Lloyd and hundreds of others—but, these days, he's just as likely to be embraced by the Americana crowd. Sometimes there might be an incensed strangler out there but, more often than not, his innovations are lauded by his considerable fan base and fellow musicians.

"Every single person could listen to the same thing and they're all going to hear something different—no one's going to hear it the same way," Frisell says. "Music is powerful, but it doesn't hurt anybody. So much stuff can get worked out in music. It seems like such a healthy thing, a model for how human beings can fit together. Just the words that you use in discussing music—harmony and conflict and resolution and counterpoint—it shows you that if we could get along in a more musical way, things might work out better."

By his own count, *Music IS* is only Frisell's fourth true solo effort and, for the occasion, he chose to stick to material he wrote himself. The music is a survey of several of Frisell's various musical approaches, at times played straightforwardly and at other times sent through various effects and loops. Ceaselessly experimental, his style has been compared to the paintings of Jackson Pollock.

Frisell's first album for ECM Records, 1983's *In Line*, was also a solo work but, in those days, he was admittedly uneasy with the very concept of eschewing accompaniment, whether in the studio or onstage. "It was a challenge, something I had to try to figure out," he says. "How to be comfortable with actually making a statement, letting it hang there in the air and not panicking. The air and the space and the time become part of the conversation with an audience, and whatever the energy coming back from the audience is. Gradually, over the years, I've gotten more comfortable with it. The first few times I did it, it really was torturous."

Eventually, he says, "I felt like I could get off somehow playing solo; it felt like I had broken through. I want to have the same feeling when I'm playing with a group—just being able to play whatever I want at any moment, that kind of freedom."

The still somewhat-reticent Frisell—who recently moved back to New York City after decades in Seattle because, he says, he found himself spending so much time in the jazz capital anyway—even allowed himself to serve as the subject of a 2017 documentary film, by director Emma Franz. In *Bill Frisell: A Portrait*, a lineup of musicians ranging from Paul Simon and Bonnie Raitt to jazz greats Jack DeJohnette, Zorn, Carter and Jim Hall pile on the praises for the Grammy-winning (and recipient of numerous *Downbeat* Best Guitarist awards) musician.

When he was first approached about the film idea, Frisell says, "I was open to having [Franz] around, but I didn't know what it was going to be or what she was gonna do with it, really. It went on for quite a while to the point where I thought, 'Wow, how much stuff do you need?'"

He's happy with the result. "I feel like it's really honest," he says. "It's hard for me to watch myself talk, but it wasn't like the story of my life or anything like that, and it's not chronological. It's more trying to show the process you go through to try to write music or play music."

Just don't expect the film to explain Bill Frisell in any definitive way. "The reason I play is so I don't have to talk," he says, returning to the new album's theme, "Music is my true way of expressing myself and it really is impossible to put into words what that is. Every time you put a name on it, the danger is that it limits you."

STEPHEN MALKMUS

On the eve of Pavement's 30th anniversary, the indie-rock icon takes a left turn toward 21st-gentury gadgetry, grassroots string music and the good ol' Grateful Dead.

By **MIKE GREENHAUS**

STEPHEN MALKMUS has somehow turned into a picky Deadhead. "I had cousins who worked for them secondhand, and they tried to get me into the Dead when I was 12," the 51-year-old Pavement co-founder says with a grin. "I didn't get it. I was into Devo and thought they sounded slow and uninteresting. But now, I'll listen to the Dead on Sirius in my car, and I'll text my drummer a picture of what they're playing and say, 'You *gotta* hear this version.'" He pauses to offer a knowing look. "Of course, they upset me sometimes when they're not playing a good show."

It's a mid-March afternoon and Malkmus is sprawled out in a fishbowl-like room deep within his longtime label Matador's New York office, wearing a blazer, jeans and a baseball cap that conceals his long, shaggy hair. One wall is decorated with a painting by a member of Parquet Courts. "They sound like Pavement," he says, casually, as he sips hot black coffee from a mug featuring the album art from The National's latest release. He's a bit tired. An avid sports fan, Malkmus took in a Nets game at Brooklyn's Barclays Center last night—where he met UVA-educated Net Joe Harris—and he's in the middle of a busy day of interviews promoting his latest release, *Sparkle Hard*, with his long-running solo group the Jicks. (He's glad he was in Europe during the NCAA Tournament and missed Virginia's particularly heartbreaking loss to UMBC.)

The New York winter dryness is also getting to him. "My eyelids are kind of droopy from the office heat," he says, before closing his eyes, putting his feet up and thinking back on the genesis of his new LP. "There was some talk of having a name producer, someone who would leave an imprint or guarantee that you are going to get high-fidelity songs that sound like today. The people I asked were clever geniuses, but when I played them the demos they said, 'These sound pretty fully formed; I wouldn't really be producing it.'"

The Jicks ended up enlisting The Decemberists' Chris Funk, crafting a song cycle that captures the loose swagger and creative wordplay that Malkmus has been known for since his Pavement days. Yet, they also added in some unexpected touches, including string arrangements, a Kim Gordon cameo and even some Auto-Tune. "I'm into new gadgetry," Malkmus says with a laugh. "I get bombarded with spam from these companies once I order something, but it can be fun to play with—very much like video games, except you're making songs. I listen to everything first without Auto-Tune and then, if I'm a little bored by the vocals on a song like 'Rattler,' I'll throw it on there. It's almost a guilty pleasure—'Do you want to hear me talking some bullshit or a robotic version of me talking some bullshit?'"

You usually wait a while between albums, but it took you slightly longer than usual to follow up 2014's *Wig Out at Jagbags*. Was there a particular reason for the lag?
Once you finish something—a tour, a record, a campaign—there's a time for self-reflection and assessing, and then you're on to the next one. I have a lot of records and I can just keep going headfirst but I thought that, while I was writing songs, I also wanted to take a little more time off to just watch and not play—let things come instead of going after them. Also, before the last record, I had been living in Germany since 2011 and moved back to Portland, Ore. about four years ago.

Another thing—and I'm not so proud to talk about this because it wasn't a huge success—was that I was asked to make the music for this Netflix show *Flaked* and that took up a bit of my time and was a different way of thinking about music. In the end, I didn't use any ideas from that on this record, but it still informed it.

This record could have happened earlier, but time goes by. Family vacations happen and, all of a sudden, a year has passed and your children are growing up. I was also working on some music that's more abstract and electronic that might be interesting to release at some point. [*Laughs.*]

You mentioned that you spent time living in Germany. What led you overseas?
My wife, Jessica Hutchins, is a fantastic artist and she'd been having some success and was in the [2010] Whitney Biennial. Just like with a band, you have to strike when these things happen. She was also ready to get out of Portland and wanted to move over there. But, after a while, we reluctantly thought, "We have children. We aren't going to stay in Germany forever." It's a typical story.

I've never felt completely connected to my local music ecology. I've felt *part of* it, but I've never felt like an Oregon musician. And living in Germany only made that more apparant. When you get back to America after living in Europe, you notice these socializing rituals—how people say hello and these pleasantries that are visceral senses. The Germans are very quiet, Americans are very loud. [*Laughs.*] You come back to

America and it can seem like sort of this aural terrorism. But you get used to it just like a factory that has bad smells. Your nose adapts and you can't even smell it anymore.

There's a lot of that going on in our lives on all different levels, obviously. It also was nice to be back in Portland; we haven't been rehearsing a lot as a band or developing an organic language. It's been a little more goal-oriented, which is not a bad thing, especially when you're trying to—at least slightly—retool your sound, which I was interested in doing.

Was there a moment you realized you were writing toward a record?
I had these songs in the back of my mind that were a bit more elegant and tourable in a band situation, with guitars and choruses, so I decided to focus on that. But all that other stuff had to happen before this. I was compartmentalizing—no one wants to hear about the old guy whose got all these records that you don't really wanna hear. So I had to work through all this shit to get back to this relatively focused rock-and-roll thing, which is what the Jicks sound like, for better or worse. I put my demos in a Venn diagram, and these came together.

You worked with Chris Funk for the first time on *Sparkle Hard* and tried out a number of different approches on this record. What led you to open up your sound?
I might have wanted a string player on a song or the band might have wanted to have Kim Gordon sing on a song, but I also might have just been like, "Whatever, I'm just gonna put out the song the way it is." Chris made things happen. So, it was great to have somebody there to push things in another direction—a people person, a networker with good ears. That immediately changed the project. He obviously helped with any down-home, acoustic instruments, but he likes pedals, too. I'm fine with that because I like to pick up a guitar and be a child—just play as if it's new to me. I don't practice and I definitely just want it be fresh.

I messed with some of the plug-ins at home on my own dime because, when you're doing some slightly vulnerable experimentation, sometimes it's nice to do it alone first. I played around with Auto-Tune and some low vocal effects—the last song "Difficulties" is a string loop that I wasn't sure anyone was gonna like. I don't want to waste other people's time, and you don't want them to influence you negatively. You have to come to your own decisions about some things and then they can get shot down, but at least you've given it some time.

You started mixing in some diverse covers, from Steve Miller to Black Sabbath to Pavement, during your last album cycle. What inspired you to add those songs to your setlist?
I sound like the boss, but my band would do even more covers if I let them. I'm always at my parents' house on New Year's Eve, but my band does this party in Portland where they spend a month rehearsing for these decade retrospectives. I haven't tried to conceptualize it that much, like a band like Yo La Tengo—covers are a fun cherry on top of a gig.

Doing Pavement songs, of course, is fun because people dig it. It's fun for the band to play those songs. It's a chance for them to take their foot off the accelerator and just play around and see what reaction we're gonna get from it. We might have been a little more afraid to play those songs when we first started and were trying to make our own identity. I can imagine Morrissey's band feels odd when they play Smiths songs.

Do you recognize yourself in your older songs?
I came to an opinion that when you look back that far—for me, I hate to say, it's been almost 30 years—it's like just another person or another time on one level. But then, if you look at the evidence—look at the lyrics like you were writing a paper—it's still the same. I totally recognize that I'm in the same world, except older. It's the same mental jujitsu that you're doing. And, in the end, music is a chance for adults to be childish. And, by childish, I don't mean that it can't be intense or smart, but it's like playing around or play-acting—things that adults don't do in public so much, unless they're in a band or acting or role-playing in their leisure time. Our work is your play so, hypothetically, we're lucky to have that playfulness in our music. Now, the lyric writing—that's hard work. But that's what people value about music—you thought about it, you went back and worked on a song multiple times and, by banging your head against the wall, you came up with something.

For you, music is a chance to capture your childlike wonder. Where do your kids find that inspiration?
We have to *try* to be childish and, when we do, we are almost acting out against capitalism or something. But they don't have to try. Everything is pretty new, whether it's the most basic comedy channel show or something like *Stranger Things*. I think *Stranger Things* has a pretty good message in terms of gender and the story of the Upside Down being the internet or something. My younger one is only 10 so she can't get that, but Eleven is obviously a relatable hero for a girl around her age. Music wise, she wouldn't listen to the *Stranger Things* soundtrack. They're really into showtunes; they love *Hamilton*. The younger one really likes that musical from the Oscars [*The Greatest Showman*]. Other than that, it's Spotify and I can do some hip-hop light recommendations like SZA. That 13 year old knows [the music] isn't really age-appropriate and she turns her mind off and the lyrics go by. Kids now have this self-preservation with darkness or sexuality that's really interesting to me. Maybe its because they've grown up with the internet, but younger people will hear these "dings" and they will block those things out almost like with tinfoil. Or maybe they go into their subconsious in some Freudian way.

You've also paid homage to the Dead in recent years, both covering the band and nodding to them in your original music.
My story with the Grateful Dead starts in 1977 with one of my cousins giving me *American Beauty*. I didn't understand it at all; I thought it was terrible and the album art was ugly. Then in '84, in high school, there was a bizarre crossover between punk-rock and the Grateful Dead. I was into punk and being an outsider high-school kid, and I started to associate them with drug-taking. It was about being a 15-or-16-year-old kid who could walk around the parking lot at their shows. I hadn't taken acid yet, but I smoked weed and learned some of the basic songs.

But I was still a little afraid. Then, I went to college in Charlottesville, Va. and, lo and behold, the scene expanded to not just be high-school freaks and Deadheads in the classic sense, but preppy handsome fraternity guys that dated sorority girls and were into the laid-back feeling of the band and throwing Frisbees and just chilling. I started listening to live tapes, but I got a little angry at the band because of their fans. My mom even went to see them in the late-'80s.

I basically skipped the Dead in the '90s and was into indie-rock and The Fall and, around 2005, I started listening again and getting deeper. I got into psychedelic music—guitar music—and I was so into obscure things and Bay

Continued on page 87

HOWARD LEVY

- Rocket -

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Natural Born Pickers

After serving as bluegrass' greatest cross-genre ambassadors for decades, Del McCoury and The Travelin' McCourys turn their attention toward their own family legacy with two new albums. *By* **JEFF TAMARKIN**

THERE ARE TWO THINGS THAT DEL MCCOURY, widely acknowledged as one of the greatest bluegrass singers and guitarists of all time, didn't want to do when he was starting out: sing and play guitar. He was content to play the banjo and fade into the background.

"It's funny how life goes," says Del, recalling those long-ago days. "Sometimes you do things you don't want to do. When I quit playing with Bill Monroe, I thought, 'If I'm gonna get my own band, it'd work better if I do play the guitar because I can hold the rhythm up in the band. And sometimes, there might not be a good tenor singer in the band. Well, I can do that—I'll just sing the verses and sing tenor on the chorus.'"

Now 79 and more than five decades removed from that life-changing stint with Monroe's Blue Grass Boys—the band often credited with creating the genre—Del McCoury is the longtime leader of his own namesake band and the inspiration behind one of the country's most highly anticipated annual music festivals. It's a family affair: His sons—mandolinist Ronnie, 51, and banjoist Rob, 47—are not only core members of The Del McCoury Band but also co-leaders of The Travelin' McCourys, a spinoff that takes bluegrass outside of its comfort zone. Fiddler Jason Carter and bassist Alan Bartram round out both outfits, with guitarist Cody Kilby taking Del's place in the combo that the brothers affectionately call "The Travelers." Everyone, of course, sings.

Both The Del McCoury Band and The Travelin' McCourys will release new albums this spring—on their own McCoury Music label. The title of the former, *Del McCoury Still Sings Bluegrass*, is a nod to the elder artist's solo debut, *Del McCoury Sings Bluegrass*, released originally on Arhoolie Records and celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. *The Travelin'*

McCourys marks a different kind of milestone: It's the eight-year-old band's proper debut album, following *Pick*, a 2012 collaboration with Keller Williams, and a number of singles and solo/duo releases.

"It feels really good to finally get it out because, in the beginning, for five years or more now, we just bounced around with so many different guitar players," says Ronnie. "We wrote them all down the other day and there must have been 20 guitar players. We never hired anybody. We just had gigs, but we couldn't support somebody until just the last two years."

Kilby, a 14-year veteran of new Country Music Hall of Fame inductee Ricky Skaggs' band, had actually done some playing with the Travelin' McCourys back in their infancy, but it wasn't until 2015, says Ronnie, that they were all on the same page: "He was ready to make a change, and we were ready and able to hire him and keep him employed."

Even with the personnel issue sorted out, finding time to record presented a challenge. In 2017, The Travelin' McCourys played upward of 70 gigs, and The Del McCoury Band logged another 75. They cut the two albums over the past couple of years in a hit-and-run manner, whenever the various players were able to grab some studio time. In order to test the waters and put some product out there for their fans, the Travelers released a handful of singles while they pieced the album together.

"With both bands, we stay pretty busy touring," says Rob. "So we would get in with Dad when we could and just cut one, maybe two, songs and then hang it up for a while and come back. We used the '60s model: Release singles and then put them all out in an album."

Not surprisingly, perhaps, there are significant differences between the way The Travelin' McCourys operate as a unit and how Del works. Del prefers to serve as his own song curator, which might come from deep inside the Americana songbook or contemporary Nashville.

"Hot Wired," the leadoff track on the Del record, was penned by Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Shawn Camp and features Del's grandson Heaven McCoury on electric guitar, a rarity on a Del release. Among the other tracks, "Letters Have No Arms" was first made famous by Ernest Tubb in 1949 while "To Make Love Sweeter for You" has been recorded by Jerry Lee Lewis and others. Carlene Carter co-wrote "I Fell in Love," from a 1990 album of the same name, with Heartbreakers members Benmont Tench and Howie Epstein. Del wrote some tunes himself; Ronnie, who co-produced the new set, brought others to him.

It was Ronnie who convinced his father to record a Tom Petty composition in the late-'90s, "Love Is a Long Road." When Ronnie met Petty years later, the songwriter told him that Del's version was his favorite cover of any of his songs.

For The Travelin' McCourys, self-penned tunes and well-chosen covers are the name of the game. "I Live on a Battlefield," co-written by Nick Lowe and Paul Carrack, and John Hartford's "Natural to Be Gone," are nestled among songs that Ronnie and Alan Bartram composed.

And then there are two credited to Jerome J. Garcia, a churning take on "Cumberland Blues"—a song born from bluegrass sensibilities if there ever was one—and a muscular, soulful workup of the '70s ballad "Loser." Like so many millions of their generation, Ronnie and Rob were, and remain, Deadheads. Ronnie even played in a Grateful Dead cover band for a while.

But unlike most musicians who clock in time with a Dead tribute act, Ronnie actually got to meet Garcia, one of his musical heroes. The event—backstage at a Dead gig in September 1987, in Landover, Md.—placed three generations of bluegrass mavens in a room together.

"Long story short," says Ronnie, "I had these banjos that I had picked up, and [mandolin great] David Grisman is an instrument genius. I called him and he said, 'Hey, Jerry might be interested in these things.' So I got a call from Jerry and he says, 'I'll be at the Capital Centre. Why don't you come down and bring them?' I took my dad with me. He hadn't seen Jerry since [Garcia] was playing in [the bluegrass quintet] Old and in the Way. When I got to the Grateful Dead show, we sat down for about an hour, and Jerry said to Del: 'The first time I ever saw you was with Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys in 1963 in Berkeley, Calif.; you were the guitar player.' Then he turned to me and said, 'You know, your dad was a big influence on me.' That was really cool to hear."

Cumberland also happens to be the name of the largest city on the Potomac River outside of Washington, D.C. Situated in western Maryland and surrounded by lush green mountains, it's within spitting distance of both Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Since 2008, Cumberland's Allegany County Fairgrounds has hosted DelFest, a now-annual, family-friendly event that has matured into one of the most reliably pleasurable festivals in the United States offering primarily traditional acoustic music.

This year's DelFest is set for May 24–27. Naturally, The Del McCoury Band and The Travelin' McCourys top the bill. The choice lineup also includes such A-list attractions as Skaggs, Greensky Bluegrass, The Infamous Stringdusters, Rhiannon Giddens, Richard Thompson, Old Crow Medicine Show and a mind-blowing, once-in-a-lifetime "Bluegrass Congress," featuring The Del McCoury Band, Skaggs, Grisman, Sam Bush, Béla Fleck, Jerry Douglas, Bryan Sutton and Stuart Duncan.

DelFest wasn't Del's idea initially. His manager, Stan Strickland, suggested putting a music shindig together, and Del quickly nixed it: "I didn't want the headache," he says. But when he was shown the location in Maryland, Del fell in love, realizing it was the ideal setting for a music festival. Things took off from there—navigations through political waters and all. The first DelFest, in 2008, featured Vince Gill, David Bromberg, Punch Brothers and many more. The level of artistry presented has never flagged.

* * *

DEL MCCOURY SOMETIMES marvels at how far he's come. Born in North Carolina in 1939, Del's older brother started him on the guitar when he was nine. When he heard Earl Scruggs play the banjo, the boy decided that was what he wanted to do. But he was equally impressed by Lester Flatt's guitar work and gravitated toward that instrument. Ten years later, he was playing it professionally.

"I got along good with Bill Monroe," says Del. "A lot of musicians had a hard time with him. He expected you to get out on that stage and work hard with him. I believed in working hard, too."

Del never considered playing any other style of music. Although Elvis was the king in the '50s, rock-and-roll was not a route he had any interest in taking. Once he formed his own groups and began recording, Del soon discovered that he'd made the right decision—he quickly became one of bluegrass music's reigning stars, taking home dozens of International Bluegrass Music Association Awards since 1990, a Grammy in 2006 (plus five other nominations) and, in 2010, a lifetime achievement award from the National Endowment for the Arts, in the field of folk and traditional arts.

He was even invited to play at the Grand Ole Opry. "That was really fun for me to do," he says. "I'd heard it since I was a kid. The Opry is actually a country music place but they've always been good to bluegrass."

As the years went on, Del's boys picked up instruments and soon enough realized that they, too, wanted to play in that style. Ronnie joined Del's then-current band in 1981, at age

"When we were kids, we'd see that dad was a grown man who was having the best time," Rob McCoury says. "Music is his life. He's still totally into it. I hope I make it there and I'm still into it at that age."

13, and Rob came in six years later. Most folks would balk at working with a parent, but Del and his boys have nothing but mutual respect for one another.

"When I go to his house, he's got a room where he hangs out and, most of the time, the guitars are out and he's got CDs out, or he's sitting there with his headphones on listening to this music," says Rob. "When we were kids, we'd see that dad was a grown man who was having the best time. Music is his life. He's still totally into it. I hope I make it there and I'm still into it at that age."

"Everything's very natural with him," adds Ronnie. "My dad never once told me to practice. He always taught by example, and I always saw the joy that he had onstage. For my brother and myself, it's just kind of infectious."

"It would be hard for me to replace any of them because they're so good at what they do," says Del about all of his band members. "I wouldn't even think about it—they're great musicians and great guys. And especially with my boys, we don't have to rehearse much; we just know what each other is doing."

It was Del who suggested that Ronnie and Rob start their own band though, so that they'd have an outlet as he gets up there in the years. Ronnie and Rob have both brought their own experiences and modern sensibilities to the music. Just as Del was a second-generation bluegrass artist, the Travelin' McCourys have not only helped keep the traditions alive but have also suggested where the next generation might take the music. Growing up in Pennsylvania, the boys listened to bluegrass, but they also went out to see concerts by bands like Rush.

* * *

ROB AND RONNIE HAVE NOW settled into the routine of shifting seamlessly between their two parallel realities. The Travelin' McCourys are still a young band, finding their way. Then, when they're with Del, that means accommodating their dad's vision. "I've had people come up to me that knew my dad before I was born and they've said, 'Your dad's never changed,'" says Ronnie. "I'm still in shock about how great he is as a musician and a singer. The only thing we try to do is make life as easy and comfortable for him as we can."

Toward that end, Del's wife and Ronnie and Rob's mother, known as Jean—although, "believe it or not, her first name is actually Delma," says Ronnie—travels with the others, handling the merch table. She also keeps things in check. ("I love driving the tour bus, but my wife made me quit that about 10 years ago," Del says.) It's their life, as a family, and one that none of them would ever consider changing.

"One thing that always strikes me as funny, and this happens a lot," says Rob, "is that sometimes people will come up to us and say, 'Man, I don't like bluegrass, but I like you guys.' One reason that we've had that acceptance is because we've been very fortunate to play with Phish and the Allman Brothers Band. So we'll get in front of a crowd that wouldn't normally come and see us—who don't even know who we are—but we're accepted by those bands, which kind of makes us cool. Then they start checking you out. There are people who come up to us all time, and say, 'I saw you guys play with Phish [at Camp Oswego].' Years ago, we did a record with Steve Earle and, again, people say to us, 'I'm a Steve Earle fan, and I saw you guys and I've been a fan ever since.'"

Where bluegrass music will go in the future is anyone's guess. The McCourys all have some thoughts on that. "I think the foundation of it, the acoustic instruments—the banjo, the Dobro, the mandolin, fiddle, guitar and upright bass—that's not gonna change," says Ronnie. "The way that people approach the music and their instruments, that's when the change comes."

Del adds with a hearty laugh—a trait all three share—"I can remember a time when this music didn't even have a name! But nowadays, you can say 'bluegrass' to just about anybody and they know what you're talking about."

Observation of My OWN COMPLICITY

Merrill Garbus ushers in a new, dance-floor ready Tune-Yards era, perfectly suited to take on the age of President Trump.

By **MIKE AYERS**

MERRILL GARBUS LOOKS pained. It's a bright Sunday morning in early March, and she's downing a decaf cappuccino at a trendy little Brooklyn cafe in Williamsburg, nestled between a few people wired on caffeine and pastries. It's cold out, with nothing resembling spring in sight. In a few hours, she'll be on a flight to England for the first leg of a European tour. She just wrapped a short North American club run two days prior, only a few blocks away at the 1,800-person Brooklyn Steel. But none of that has to do with her pained expression.

Instead, she's trying to explain the lyrics she writes for Tune-Yards (originally stylized as tUnE-yArDs).

"It's impressionistic," she says. "Maybe impressionistic is the wrong word. It feels like Dada sometimes or e.e. cummings—people who are using language in a way, where you're like, 'Huh?' If this project is how I'm filtering the world through me and my experience, then the words come out of trying to express what that experience is, more than trying to narrate some sort of story," she adds.

She looks less in pain now—hopeful, even.

Minutes later, though, the discussion gets deep into race and white privilege, something she's thought about often over the last several years. But, unlike a lot of people these days, who hide behind social media walls to blast out their discourse, or shame family members and co-workers behind their backs, Garbus has looked inward, and is motivated to learn what is going on.

It's a notion that shines through on Tune-Yards' fourth full-length release, *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*, a dance-driven record that's worlds apart from her 2009 debut *BiRd-BrAiNs*, which was mostly written by Garbus on her ukulele. Now, her beats and rhythms are sweaty, cathartic and ready for the club floor. But these beats are embedded with lyrics that feel like swirling thoughts that simply spilled out of Garbus—as if she was screaming into a diary, with little care for consistency and coherency, just in time for the reign of President Trump.

"I have an entire journal worth of thoughts, truly the weirdest shit ever," she says while sipping her coffee. Faint smells of patchouli travel with Garbus, complementing her big colorful scarfs, baggy pants and a shirt that looks like she's dressed in a cozy blanket. But as comfortable as her outward appearance may be, there hasn't been much rest in the last several years. "I'm putting down a big mess on paper, and pretty much going to the 'office' every day and putting down musical ideas. Idea, idea, idea, idea. From there, it's distilling and carving away. That kind of process means there's a lot of trash."

One of the album's most powerful songs comes at around the halfway point. In "Colonizer," she sings about "white woman tears" and using a "white woman's voice to tell stories of travels with African men." It's a startling admission, but it's the essence of who Garbus is these days and how she views her role in the world as a musician lucky enough to find a fanbase and fill marquee venues night after night.

Ask her about "Colonizer" and you can see her mind shift back to memories of her own life and how those feelings were birthed. She spent time in Kenya and Haiti, where she realized how much of a bubble the U.S. really was.

"It felt like it was my formative experience; it's a very specific, white American, privileged experience," she says.

Those are the types of thoughts she presents throughout the 12-song, 44-minute *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*. It can be jarring and sometimes disturbing. And, at the same time, it's a sonic experience that feels very 2018, where Garbus is paving the way for how people in privileged positions—in this case, a professional musician—should look at their own life with a high degree of self-awareness and self-reflection.

Ask Garbus if she thinks this is a risky proposition or a slippery slope to ascend, and she'll tell you what she thinks rather bluntly.

"It feels disgusting," she says. "Which I think it should."

* * *

GARBUS WAS BORN IN THE Northern New Jersey town of Ridgewood, right outside of New York City. Her mom taught piano and her dad was an architect who worked for IBM for most of her childhood. Her parents met playing folk music and instilled in her, from an early age, the virtues of luminaries such as Doc Watson, Bach and Steely Dan. "My dad definitely rocked me as a baby to *Pretzel Logic*," she says. "It's deeply embedded."

They moved around the Northeast, with stints in the Bronx and Poughkeepsie, N.Y., before settling in New Canaan, Conn., in the mid-'80s. It was there that she was exposed to the pop and classic-rock radio stations coming out of nearby New York City, simultaneously

Eliot Lee Hazel

filling her brain with things like Madonna, Lisa Lisa and the Cult Jam, Michael Jackson and Led Zeppelin.

She attended Smith College in Northampton, Mass., and after college, spent some time working as a puppeteer—first in Putney, Vt. and then Brattleboro, Vt. That experience turned into a valuable tunring point in the Tune-Yards story—around 2005, Garbus was teaching puppetry at a summer camp in New Jersey and met future Tune-Yards bassist Nate Brenner, her primary musical collaborator and romantic partner since 2008.

After a brief stint living in Montreal and playing in an indie band, Garbus relocated to Oakland, Calif., where she would start Tune-Yards as a musical project in earnest.

She recorded the tracks that would become *BiRd-BrAiNs* during 2007 and 2008, with just a handheld voice recorder. The album featured her on the ukulele, and presented a mish-mash of found sounds, showcasing her interest in exploring different rhythmic patterns in her material.

Garbus moved to Oakland in 2009 and started working with Brenner on the material that would make up *WHOKILL*, her 2011 sophomore album and first for indie powerhouse 4AD. That record instantly put her on the global map, where, all of a sudden, she was touring Europe and the U.S., headlining mid-sized clubs and playing large festivals. *WHOKILL* also dramatically expanded her sound palette, where standout tracks like "Esso" and "Gangsta" showcased a myriad of influences, from pop to African to psychedelic-rock. It immediately became clear that Garbus was not interested in making stereotypical indie-rock, and she certainly wasn't interested in modern conventions about constructing

a song or channeling her voice.

"[On that album, I was] using the looping pedal more than anything, as an instrument for the first time, really—especially as a compositional tool," she says. "'Bizness' came out of working with a looping pedal and drums. 'My Country' was the same thing. A lot of those were 'make a drum beat with acoustic drums, and a drum pedal, and use the ukulele to find the harmony and melody.'"

Tune-Yards' 2014 release *Nikki Nack* found Garbus and Brenner exploring a bit more of their electronic side, but they didn't fully commit to going full-on dance until it came time to start writing the material that would make up *Creep*. Garbus would lay down beats and rhythms in her studio in Oakland, and every Tuesday, once she was done for the day, she would head down to a local club to DJ. There, she would mix records with new sounds she had been working on, essentially testing out her latest music on clubgoers in real-time.

At the same time, she was filling up journals with what she describes as "observation of my own complicity"—along with what she was witnessing in the world around her. Though Garbus says you'll never be able to find a narrative in her lyrics, tracks like "ABC 123," "Heart Attack" and "Private Life" certainly feel like some of her most intimate and personal to date—married with a more euphoric sound this time around.

The album can be a strange listening experience. As the title suggests, there's something very deliberate about how life is these days and the sensations you can experience (or not) from other people—strangers who can look at you, analyze you, share and spread you without your knowledge or consent. On the song "Private Life," Garbus sings, "I don't wanna, I don't wanna/ Hear my voice, hear my voice/ You would never guess what was living inside/ Of people like me and you/ Oh, will you erase what you

"The music I'm listening to now is often strong women's voices," Garbus says. "I want to hear these empowered women. I'm gravitating toward other women who are very bold and use their voices."

embrace?" The lyrics touch on the eradication of inner thoughts, a prevalent theme in our current over-sharing, digitally obsessed culture.

But while she was writing the material for *Creep*, Garbus also began what can only be described as a transformative experience. She started attending a six-month-long meditation program at the East Bay Meditation Center, where she learned how to "unpack her whiteness."

"White people generally have to go through a process of waking up out of the trance of white supremacy and privilege," she says. "I'm just starting to do that. I expect it will take me the rest of my life; it's important work to continue to hack away at."

At that point, Brenner says,

> "White people generally have to go through a process of waking up out of the trance of white supremacy and privilege. I'm just starting to do that. I expect it will take me the rest of my life; it's important work to continue to hack away at."
>
> **MERRILL GARBUS**

he also saw a change in Garbus that impacted the recording of the album. "The workshops really shaped a lot of her lyrical content on the record," he says. "One of the biggest things I noticed was it seemed like her overall approach to making the record changed as well. After taking the course, making the album was much more of a long, slow, steady process. In the past, we really crammed in everything in a rushed adrenaline-filled frenzy. This time felt much more sustainable and healthy, and was filled with more confidence and fun."

* * *

GARBUS' NEW OUTLOOK HAS started to color her live show. She's conscious that her audience is mainly white and, at times, seems to take meaning from her music that isn't necessarily there.

"It's not clear what's happening," she says. "A song like 'Gangsta'—I wrote it with a completely different thing in mind, but people are the most excited these days during that song. It's about gentrification so when a bunch of white people scream that at the top of their lungs at a Tune-Yards show, my hope is that the lyrics get into their brains and settle. And maybe they have an experience where they are like, 'Oh, my god, that reminds me of this one lyric,' and I'm thinking of my own role here."

That, in itself, is a bit indicative of the Tune-Yards trajectory. Because the thing about this project is that there was never really a plan for it to become what it did. And Garbus will be the first to admit that there isn't really a plan for the future.

"The way she thinks about music and writes music seems to constantly change," Brenner says. "She's always challenging herself, taking voice and drum lessons, learning new production techniques, and messing around with new synths, drum machines and samplers."

For fun these days, Garbus has been getting into science fiction authors like Ursula LeGuin and Octavia Butler. And she wants to take a leap into production soon—she's dabbled in recording other artists and hopes to work with a lot more.

"The music I'm listening to now is often strong women's voices," she says. "I want to hear these empowered women. I'm gravitating toward other women who are very bold and use their voices."

She's also been working on a massive annotation project, where she's taking all the lyrics in *Creep* and creating a hyperlinked document—a "resource for fans" she says—that will point them "to a slew of rabbit holes, musical and lyrical influences, and questions."

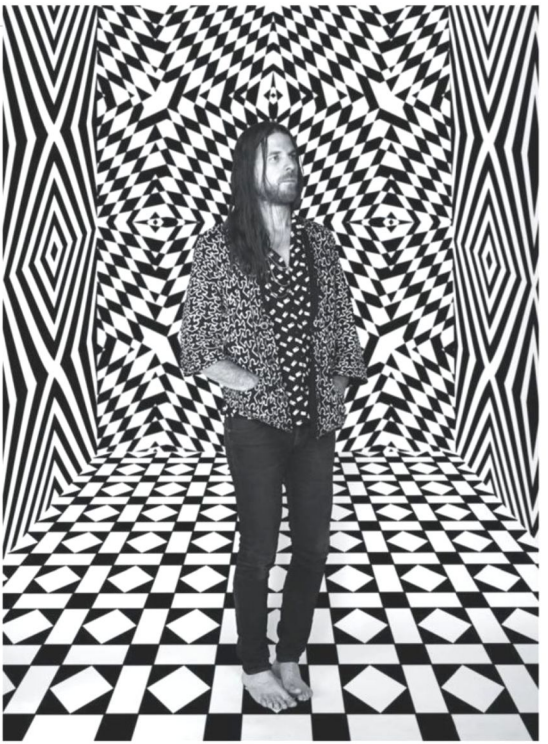
But as far as Tune-Yards goes, who knows? There could be more sounds, more new directions in the evolution or it could fall back to something Garbus rediscovered sitting on a hard drive somewhere. The plan is to *unplan* as much as possible, which, she says, was the essence of Tune-Yards to begin with.

"I always thought of it as a *project*," she says. "I wanted it to have flexibility. I didn't call it 'Merrill Garbus' because I didn't want it to be just me. Of course people equate Tune-Yards with me, but it was always meant to be something larger than that." Elliot Lee Hazel

THAT SPACE-AGE FEELING

Jonathan Wilson may be best known for helping revive the classic Laurel Canyon sound, but on his latest sonic journey, this "resident hippie" sets off toward the cosmos on a deeply personal, inward mission.

By **MIKE GREENHAUS**



JONATHAN WILSON WAS PARTWAY through explaining how he scored the nickname "resident hippie" when he casually dropped some pretty serious street cred: Roger Waters had recently spent time hanging out in his kitchen. "We did about 60 percent of his album at my studio, so that was a trip having Roger here," Wilson says with a grin as he describes the genesis of his current post in Waters' solo band. "He was trying to figure me out, like, 'What's this guy's deal?' and came up with this affectionate term: 'resident hippie.' He calls my place the 'hippie palace.'"

It's a sunny winter day and Wilson is sitting in a gazebo on the multi-building California compound that currently houses his home studio, Fivestar. The compact, largely vertical, lot of land, which Wilson rents from his old friend Conor Oberst, is located near the top of a steep hill overlooking Echo Park, secluded from the nearby suburban hiss by a lush wall of trees and plants. Wilson—a tall, long-haired 43-year-old singer, guitarist and producer, who is looking very LA in a regal purple shirt, necklace and dark sunglasses—is as busy as ever. Though he's technically in the middle of a promo cycle for his first studio album in five years, *Rare Birds*, he's spent much of the week recording with longtime associates Dawes and is now getting ready to leave for Australia on the next leg of Waters' world tour. Currently, another pal, film director Grant James, is taping a *Rare Birds* EPK; Wilson can't help but make a few tweaks before the recording commences.

"I've just been gathering up the songs, and different bits and bobs, since 2013 during the *Fanfare* touring cycle, but I didn't start on *Rare Birds* until the summer of 2016," Wilson says of the five-year gap since his last proper solo release, a touch of his Southern drawl still audible. "I'm still in the studio daily. It's great to be able to stay hands-on the whole time between albums and just to stay in the game by working on somebody else's thing. All these projects coexist; I'll learn from other albums I'm working on and try those ideas out on my own thing. The albums and artists I produce are guinea pigs for of my own shit."

During the past few years, those guinea pigs have included Waters, Oberst, Lana Del Rey, Erykah Badu, Farmer Dave Scher, Roy Harper and perhaps his closest collaborator, Josh Tillman, whose Father John Misty sound Wilson has honed from the beginning.

At the same time, he's come to personify the axis connecting three strands of Southern California music—rootsy but spacey Americana, post-jam guitar-rock and the last vestige of classic-rockers touring well beyond what many assumed was their last encore.

Rare Birds rubs up against all those authentic touchstones, but also takes a left turn toward Talk Talk-approved post-rock and the stadium-size hooks and synthesized beats that made Fleetwood Mac international icons. It's a sound that's recently been reclaimed by a new generation of art-rock acts who no longer consider "pop" to be a (completely) dirty word. Wilson has even coined a term to describe that signature sound: maximalist.

"I've come to accept that that's the only thing that I can do," he says. "I can't make a simple guitar, bass-and-drum track—it just doesn't fuckin' happen for me. The stuff I do with Josh [Tillman] is the same way. I'm excited to add that last fuckin' oboe and find

the sonic space to make all those things coexist. There's something about that term in opposition to the perfect little set of songs that are in their little compartments. The album is a brief, fear-based sensibility where you assume that the listener has the attention span of a gnat. It goes back to those days when I was experimenting with stacking myself, whether that's guitar, bass, drums or big harmonies."

After he wraps up his EPK, Wilson heads inside the beautiful, wooden enclave that houses his studio. A few rooms on the property are earmarked as his "living quarters," but pretty much every corner doubles as storage for new and old gear. Dawes' equipment is still set up in the main room; a completed Rubik's cube sits on a table downstairs. Wilson thinks that the band's drummer, Griffin Goldsmith, solved the puzzle. Though he produced Dawes' early breakthrough albums and helped cultivate the modern Laurel Canyon sound, it's been a while since Wilson's worked with the group and he's excited to have them back at his house. As always, he's hyper-focused on crafting the perfect album for the Goldsmiths while still making sure he leaves time for his original music. It's a delicate balancing act that Wilson pulls off well. After all, he named his 2011 crossover *Gentle Spirit* for a reason.

"That confidence on the production side to do anything was not there in 2009," he says, surveying his idyllic studio space and arsenal of equipment. "The biggest shift would be moving from composing songs on guitar to piano around 2013. I was lucky to get an old Steinway so that's been my writing tool."

Wilson recorded a few tracks himself, eventually weaving in a number of other voices, but he laid down the meat of *Rare Birds* with drummer Joey Waronker and The Killers' Jake Blanton (a veteran of his early bands). The trio format grounds the album's kaleidoscopic tendencies, allowing Wilson to shrink into a smaller, live-band sound on more "wide-screen" songs like "Over the Midnight" and to bring more personal, "dude-at-a-piano" touches to numbers like the expansive, saxophone freak-out "Me" or the purposely precious and symphonic "Sunset Blvd."

"Moving to song is extremely powerful," Weir says. "That's something that you see with such great triumph with the Grateful Dead."

The LP boasts some of Wilson's recent collaborators, too, including Tillman, his Waters' bandmates and Lucius frontwomen Jess Wolfe and Holly Laessig—whose voices he calls majestic—and Del Rey, a rebellious pop-star who has floated in and out of his world.

"She listened to *Gentle Spirit* back in the day and started coming around," he says of Del Ray. "It was right before she put out *Ultraviolence*, and we did some stuff that's on the shelf. We rekindled our friendship about the time of *Rare Birds* so she was involved in the whole process and was my sounding board for different songs. She sings on 'Living with Myself,' which has this dark, moody, *Tunnel of Love*, Springsteen-y vibe that I thought was perfect for her."

Though Wilson's recent studio cuts have swayed toward cosmic folk-rock, *Rare Birds* has a fresh, pulsating, electric energy. He credits his new hi-fi sound to both his current pumped-up recording console and an early breakthrough he had while working on "Loving You" with a drum machine and an iPhone app that creates a string sound through various effects. (The final version of the track mixes in New Age crooner Laraaji's chanting vocals.) "That juxtaposed with a piano ballad was the sound," Wilson says. "And 'Over the Midnight' is that song's sonic sister, where I use the same exact drum machine, the same cymbals. I'm obsessed with [minimalist composer] Terry Riley and there's something about these clustery chords that are timeless—and, to me, that evoke not necessarily the past, but that space-age feeling."

Elsewhere, Tillman shines on both "49 Hairflips" and "Miriam Montague," where he adds in his patented Beach Boys vocal stacks and other layers of sound, while "Hi Ho the Righteous" has a honky-tonk twang. Dawes frontman Taylor Goldsmith is quick to note that the songs themselves are still at the center of the album. "A lot of artists that own their own studios can get carried away with what the studio can do, but he's still motivated by what a performance or what a song can do," he says. "All the rest, as beautiful and important as it all is, comes second. And *Rare Birds* is the ultimate example of that."

Wilson spent considerable time sifting through the 25 songs he tracked while working on the LP, distilling the collection down to the tunes that were a "meaningful representation of [his] personality." He eventually came up with a subconscious "algorithm" for the record, factoring in the numbers that he was naturally drawn to finish and mix. Since he'd recently gone through an intense breakup, the songs that rose to the top tilted toward the introspective.

"These songs are personal—there's some failed love that's involved and feelings that are just genuine," he admits. "It was definitely healing, cathartic, to make the album. I tried to contain some moments where the sound just cruises, and that's tough to do when it comes down to an album where you're feeling this pressure to make something exciting every step of the way. It's challenging to be able to float with patience. This album is the first time that I've made exactly what I was trying to make. And if it drags on for more than an hour, and seems like some sort of self-indulgent thing from a guy, then that's OK. Someone else can just take it off the platter."

* * *

WILSON WAS BORN IN FOREST City, N.C., and despite the city's tiny population, he was surrounded by music from an early age. His father led a local combo for over three decades and his grandfather was a Baptist preacher who recruited Wilson to provide musical accompaniment at his services. "My grandma was the choir director so, since I was born, I always respected where music coexisted with the spiritual aspect of the whole thing," he says.

His family moved throughout North Carolina and, after studying bluegrass for a spell, he formed the grungy band Muscadine with Benji Hughes in the late-'90s. They had some early success—signing with Sire Records and, as Wilson's nostalgically recalls, playing Wetlands—but Muscadine's sound eventually fell victim to the times. From there, Wilson drifted to New York—where he recorded his first, largely overlooked solo release *Frankie Ray*—and found his way to Los Angeles, where he set up shop on a remote piece of property in Laurel Canyon. Though he still had his sights set on a solo career, Wilson built a studio and quickly came to personify the '70s revival that was permeating throughout the area.

"When I first saw him and Benji, I was blown away by his playing and just general presence on a stage," Taylor

Jay Blakesberg

says. "As we all got to know each other better, we got a real sense of his impeccable and far-reaching tastes. If it's good music, old or new, he's already very aware of it. He introduced us to so many definitive records and artists that helped shape who we are. I've always felt Jonathan was a modern-day version of Leon Russell—a fearless, top-shelf assassin of a musician who brings out the best in those he comes into contact with while simultaneously making some of the best records of his time under his own name. It's a rare breed."

With the encouragement of his friend Chris Robinson, Wilson also started hosting informal jam sessions at his house that grew to include Jackson Browne, Elvis Costello, Jenny Lewis and members of Wilco, Maroon 5, Oasis, The Heartbreakers and Pearl Jam. The loose hangs turned into a destination, though shortly after Wilson issued his *Gentle Spirit* LP, some national press publically exposed the intimate jams, and he moved his studio to its current Echo Park setting. (Robinson actually first bonded with his future Black Crowes/Chris Robinson Brotherhood/As the Crow Flies keyboardist Adam MacDougall at one particularly deep jam.)

"I was trying to bring some Southern hospitality to the Canyon," Wilson reminisces. "And that has definitely spilled over into my whole social sensibility. When a band is at my studio or I'm involved in a project, I consider myself a host. That was a big part of the Roger sessions: managing the vibe."

While recording Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Wilson fortuitously attended one of the freak-folk singer's shows at McCabe's [Guitar Shop in Santa Monica, Calif.], where he first crossed paths with Tillman, whom he now describes as his "musical soul mate." Tillman had recently come down to Los Angeles from Seattle, after making his name as a member of Fleet Foxes and as a singer-songwriter in his own right; the meeting changed the course of both their careers.

"There was this gregarious dude backstage and I was thinking, 'Who the fuck is this guy?'" Wilson says. "So he came over here with some demos for *Fear Fun*. They were just so fucking great. He was trying to find his partner in crime, which he definitely did. The two of us are brothers and the fact that his career has just skyrocketed is such a triumph because that project is quality-based and song-based. The whole process has been fun—not some bullshit and red tape. That's rare."

In addition to serving as the lynchpin for a festival-friendly scene with a sharp focus on songwriting and musicianship, Wilson has also become something of a hipster liaison for a generation of storied rockers looking to connect with a new class of listeners. And while he considers everyone from David Crosby to the late Tom Petty to be part of his social circle, Wilson says Browne is his true "West Coast pops."

"He's the guy that I call when some heavy shit is about to go down," Wilson says. "That being said, he's also the guy that I call when I'm about to buy a Gibson Les Paul and I need to nerd-out about a guitar. He leads by this amazing example of his curiosity and his ability to just work non-stop. It's inspiring."

Robinson, who lived in LA for a number of years, was also instrumental in turning Wilson onto the music of the Grateful Dead, stoking an interest in improvisational music that left an indelible

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THE ROAD GOES ON FOREVER

Blackberry Smoke have long been heirs to the road-warrior mantle established by their classic-rock and country heroes. And, with their sixth full-length album, *Find a Light*, the quintet has now firmly established an authentic legacy of their own.

By **RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA**

WHEN BLACKBERRY SMOKE frontman Charlie Starr wanted Gregg Allman to sing on the band's 2016 record *Like an Arrow*, he knew he had to ask in person.

Allman was playing at the former Cox Capitol Theatre in Macon, Ga., and Starr managed to make his way backstage before the show. It was a pretty casual meeting, Starr recalls. He and Allman chatted about "typical musician things"—where they had just come from, where they were going. But then, as Allman was about to take the stage, he turned back to Starr and asked, "Do you wanna play one with us?" Starr was shocked and honored. "I'd love to," he answered. For the encore, he joined Allman on the *Eat a Peach* classic "One Way Out."

"I get goosebumps thinking about it," Starr says from his home in Atlanta. "I'll never forget that as long as I live."

The icing on the cake was that Allman also agreed to lend vocals on Blackberry Smoke's "Free on the Wing." Starr says the entire experience was one of many "pinch-me moments" in Blackberry Smoke's long, winding career.

With years of touring and five studio albums under their belt, Starr and his bandmates have hit their stride on their sixth LP, *Find a Light*, striking a commercial and creative balance by releasing it on their own label, 3 Legged Records. The band had partnered with labels in the past with mixed results, so for *Find a Light* and the aforementioned *Like an Arrow*, they chose to follow their own instincts. Objectively, it was a smart decision. *Like An Arrow* hit No. 1 on the U.S. Billboard Country and Americana/Folk charts, and without any suits to answer to, the band is able to play their country-gospel-tinged rock-and-roll however, wherever and whenever they want.

"Doing it this way, we have complete control," Starr explains. "We can make the music that we want to make, have our hair cut the way we want to have it cut and not have to answer to anyone who thinks, 'Oh, if you did this, then you would be more successful.' At this point, we're too old to hear something like that."

Find a Light also gave Blackberry Smoke the opportunity to bring in a friend, Robert Randolph. The sacred-steel guitarist is featured on one of the LP's strongest tracks "I'll Keep Ramblin'," which Randolph originally wrote as an instrumental. As the soul singer/guitarist explains, his interest in Blackberry Smoke was piqued a number of years ago.

"A bunch of people in Atlanta started telling me about them around 2011," he recalls. "They were still playing small venues at the time. I found out they were cool young cats, adding something new to the music scene. It was great to see."

Starr and Randolph played an early version of "I'll Keep Ramblin'" last May at a collective Guitar Greats concert in Nashville, and both musicians quickly realized the song's potential. "Instantly that night, after playing that with him, I thought, 'We have to record this. This really feels good,'" Starr says.

> "We can make the music that we want to make, have our hair cut the way we want to have it cut and not have to answer to anyone who thinks, 'Oh, if you did this, then you would be more successful.' At this point, we're too old to hear something like that."
>
> **CHARLIE STARR**

Randolph flew to Atlanta on a rare day off to lay down his part. "We played the song and were able to get some great footage of us jamming and improvising," he says. "It was a fun and beautiful day in Atlanta."

Starr described it as a "jaw-on-the-floor" recording session, and there's no doubt that this summer, the raucous, high-energy gospel rock of "I'll Keep Ramblin'" will be a staple of Blackberry Smoke's ever-updated live repertoire.

* * *

STARR TOOK A STEP OUTSIDE of his comfort zone on *Find a Light*, fleshing out several cuts with longtime friend Keith Nelson of Buckcherry. Usually, he prefers to write alone. "That's something we had not done before—worked together musically," Starr remembers. "We are just guitar nerd buddies. So we did it long distance and we wrote six or eight songs and they were really good." The two friends traded phone calls and GarageBand files, and four of those songs ("Runaway From It All," "Nobody Gives a Damn," "Let Me Down Easy" and "Best Seat in the House") made it onto the record.

Starr penned the rest of *Find a Light* solo, away from the rigors of the road. "I pace the

Brothers of the Road: Paul Jackson, Brit Turner, Charlie Starr, Brandon Still, Richard Turner (l-r)

David McClister

floor a lot when I'm writing," he laughs. "It's very enjoyable, but it is a precious process to me." Once all 13 tracks were written, he called the rest of the band and they hit the studio. "It always blows my mind when people say that they've worked on a record for six months or something," Starr says. "I think, 'What's takin' so long!?' Is somebody that much of a perfectionist that they just can't finish it?" He also jokes that the studio allows his band to loosen up and bring out their "toys," like vintage instruments and amps.

The key, he admits, is playing with their hearts instead of their heads, and not letting the urge to overproduce impede their inspiration. "Anybody can make a record now and you can make it perfect with technology, and that's lame. I hate to sound like an old man, but sometimes I just feel like, 'OK, well who cares if we speed up? It's passion.' Capturing those magical moments that five people create together playing instruments is way more important than staying locked to the grid."

* * *

***FIND A LIGHT* IS THE LATEST** stop on a 25-year journey that, in many ways, began when Starr relocated to Atlanta from Alabama after graduating from high school in 1993. He cycled through a bunch of different bands, but it wasn't until he met the Turner Brothers (Richard on bass and Brit on drums) that the guitarist started laying down the blueprint for what would become Blackberry Smoke. According to Starr, since they're blood-related, the Turners can find a groove better than any rhythm section he's ever worked with. "There was something that felt so good and so right about playing together," he recalls. By 2000, guitarist Paul Jackson and keyboardist Brandon Still had signed on, completing the Blackberry Smoke lineup. Chris Robinson, another Atlanta classic-rock troubadour, provided the group with their name.

In their early years, they bought a used van and toured the country, playing "every shithole between here and Los Angeles." The way Starr sees it, those lean years, playing for passive, uninterested crowds, gave the band a chance to refine their live performances in a low-pressure setting. Laughing about it now, he remembers one particularly rough night in Albuquerque, N.M. After the band laid out their gear and soundchecked their set, a dodgy club owner who "just didn't give a shit," informed them that nobody was going to show up. He paid the band $150 just to pack up their stuff and leave. "I wouldn't give anything to replace those memories," Starr says. "We were learning how to tour, how to be a band, how to put together a show and how to carry ourselves."

When their touring schedule was at its most demanding, Blackberry Smoke was regularly clocking in 250 shows a year. As Starr points out, that kind of rigorous schedule wasn't only demanding, it was nearly impossible. And it got even more difficult when children started entering the picture. "Doing 250 shows a year is just insane," he says. "Nobody can keep that kind of pace for very long. We just became a little more picky and choosy about how many shows we play. We try to tour a little smarter."

Despite gearing up for a big summer tour supporting *Find a Light*, including marquee dates with JJ Grey & Mofro and Lynyrd Skynyrd, Starr still believes the goal is "letting the music go where it's gonna go." Thematically, he argues, the album isn't political; it's more of a broad-stroke examination of our culture. "The song, 'Mother Mountain,' that ends the record, is maybe the most uplifting song on the whole record," he says. "It's sort of, metaphorically speaking: 'How can we get to higher ground as a culture?' We have to find our own light."

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The 18th Annual Relix

Festival Guide Set III

Edited by MATT INMAN

Summer is *finally* here and so is prime festival season. From Bonnaroo in Tennessee to Rock Werchter in Belgium to Fuji Rock in Japan—and everywhere in between—there's nothing better than spending a few nights experiencing live music under those summer stars. Set III of our 2018 Festival Guide stretches from Memorial Day Weekend into early August and features over 200 listings, including some of the pillars of the current festival scene.

All listings are up-to-date as of press time. Be sure to follow along with more installments in subsequent issues, along with our online updates at relix.com/festivals. If you see a "R" next to a festival listing, then make sure to visit us onsite at the *Relix* booth.

EDC Las Vegas
5/18-20 // Las Vegas, NV
Armin Van Buuren, Diplo, Zedd, Kaskade, Tiësto, Zedd, John Digweed, Eric Prydz, Maceo Plex, more
lasvegas.electricdaisycarnival.com

RiverFest
5/25-27 // Little Rock, AR
Young the Giant, Young Thug, Kip Moore, Highly Suspect, Jamey Johnson, LANY, Margo Price, Echosmith, more
riverfestarkansas.com

Rocklahoma
5/25-27 // Pryor, OK
A Perfect Circle, Godsmack, Poison, Cheap Trick, Ghost, The Cult, Halestorm, Vince Neil, more
rocklahoma.com

R Summer Camp
5/25-27 // Chillicothe, IL
moe., Umphrey's McGee, Phil Lesh and The Terrapin Family Band, Diplo, Slightly Stoopid, STS9, Tipper, more
summercampfestival.com

BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend
5/25-28 // Belfast, Ireland/Perth, Australia/Swansea, United Kingdom/Coventry, United Kingdom
Beck, Florence + The Machine, Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, Courtney Barnett, Snow Patrol, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, more
bbc.co.uk/events

Punk Rock Bowling & Music
5/25-28 // Las Vegas, Nevada
Rise Against, NOFX, At The Drive In, Suicidal Tendencies, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, X, L7, Turbonegro, more
punkrockbowling.com

Love Saves The Day
5/26-27 // Bristol, United Kingdom
Fatboy Slim, Sampha, Bicep, Loyle Carner, Tom Misch, David Rodigan & The Outlook Orchestra, George Fitzgerald, Mostack, more
lovesavestheday.org

Neon Desert
5/26-27 // El Paso, TX
Martin Garrix, At The Drive In, Gucci Mane, Dillon Francis, Cardi B, Café Tacuba, Third Eye Blind, Farruko, more
neondesertmusicfestival.com

Sunset Music Festival
5/26-27 // Tampa, FL
Marshmello, Excision, Illenium, Hippie Sabotage, Space Jesus, Rezz, Nghtmre, San Holo, more
smftampa.com

Soundset
5/27 // St. Paul, MN
Logic, Migos, Atmosphere, Erykah Badu, Wu-Tang Clan, Tyler. the Creator, Russ, Brockhampton, more
soundsetfestival.com

Camp Greensky
5/31-6/2 // Wellston, MI
Greensky Bluegrass, Jeff Tweedy, Mike Gordon, Trampled By Turtles, The Wood Brothers, Billy Strings, Fruition, more
campgreensky.com
Festival Facts: Michigan may not be known as a haven for traditional string music, but Greensky Bluegrass are continuing to flip that script with the inaugural iteration of their own curated festival, which will blend fellow pickers like Trampled By Turtles and Fruition with rock veterans like Wilco's Jeff Tweedy and Phish's Mike Gordon.

Mountain Music Festival
5/31-6/2 // Minden, WV
Umphrey's McGee, Big Something, Aqueous, The Kind Thieves, Perpetual Groove, Pimps of Joytime, more
aceraft.com/mountain-music-fest

Nelsonville Music Festival
5/31-6/3 // Nelsonville, OH
The Decemberists, George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, Alvvays, Ani DiFranco, Sunflower Bean, Charlie Parr, Kevin Morby, more
nelsonvillefest.org

Candler Park Music & Food Festival
6/1-2 // Atlanta, GA
Gov't Mule, Lettuce, Keller Williams, Houndmouth, Twiddle, Susto, Larkin Poe, Busty and the Bass, more
candlerparkmusicfestival.com

Field Day
6/1-2 // London, United Kingdom
Erykah Badu, AJ Tracey, Children of Zeus, Avalon Emerson, Ezra Collective, Barely Legal, Charlotte Gainsbourg, more
fielddayfestivals.com

Orange Warsaw
6/1-2 // Warsaw, Poland
Florence + The Machine, Sam Smith, LCD Soundsystem, Tyler. the Creator, Dua Lipa, Taco Hemingway, more
orangewarsawfestival.pl

Purple Hatter's Ball
6/1-2 // Live Oak, FL
Lettuce, Spafford, Breaking Biscuits, Toubab Krewe, The Heavy Pets, Roosevelt Collier Trio, Southern Avenue, more
purplehattersball.com

Bunbury
6/1-3 // Cincinnati, OH
Jack White, The Chainsmokers, Blink-182, Post Malone, Incubus, Foster The People, Young The Giant, Dropkick Murphys, more
bunburyfestival.com

Clusterfest
6/1-3 // San Francisco, CA
Jon Stewart, Amy Schumer & Friends, The Lonely Island, Trevor Noah, Tiffany Haddish, Jim Jefferies, Third Eye Blind, David Cross, more
clusterfest.com

Governors Ball
6/1-3 // New York, NY
Jack White, Travis Scott, Eminem, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Halsey, N.E.R.D., Damian Marley, Silk City, Khalid, more
governorsballmusicfestival.com

R Michael Arnone's Crawfish Fest
6/1-3 // Augusta, NJ
Jon Cleary, Bonerama, Taj Mahal Trio, Marcia Ball, Stanton Moore, Samantha Fish, Brandon "Taz" Niederauer, more
crawfishfest.com
Festival Facts: A boon for any Tri-State area fans of New Orleans music, especially those that weren't able to make it down to Jazz Fest in the spring, this New Jersey Crawfish Fest brings a healthy dose of true Big Easy flavor.

Ogden Music Festival
6/1-3 // Ogden, UT
Lake Street Dive, Steep Canyon Rangers, Mandolin Orange, Molly Tuttle, The Lil' Smokies, Balsam Range, more ofoam.org

Rock am Ring
6/1-3 // Nürburg, Germany
Foo Fighters, alt-J, Gorillaz, Muse, Marilyn Manson, Andrew W.K., Andy Frasco, A Perfect Circle, more
rock-am-ring.com

Wychwood
6/1-3 // Cheltenham, United Kingdom
The Gipsy Kings ft. Nicholas Reyes & Tonino Baliardo, Shed Seven, Baxter Dury, Feeder, The Go! Team, more
wychwoodfestival.com

Wichita Riverfest
6/1-9 // Wichita, KS
The Revolution, Morris Day & The Time, Matisyahu, Stephen Marley, Cypress Hill, Hawthorne Heights, ZZ Ward, more
wichitariverfest.com

Three Rivers Arts
6/1-10 // Pittsburgh, PA
Mavis Staples, Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real, Valerie June, The Mavericks, Everything Everything, more
traf.trustarts.org

Rockfest
6/2 // Kansas City, KS
Five Finger Death Punch, Ghost, Stone Temple Pilots, Vince Neil, Sevendust, Underoath, I Prevail, Of Mice & Men, more rockfestkc.com

Roots Picnic
6/2 // Philadelphia, PA
The Roots, Dave Chappelle, Lil Uzi Vert, Dirty Projectors, The Diplomats, 2 Chainz, 6LACK, DVSN, Brandy, more
rootspicnic.com/philly

Field Trip
6/2-3 // Toronto, Canada
Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Alvvays, Metric, Damian Marley, Allan Rayman, Japandroids, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Deer Tick, more
fieldtriplife.com

We Love Green
6/2-3 // Paris, France
Björk, Migos, Orelsan, Tyler. the Creator, Jamie xx, Beck, Charlotte Gainsbourg, King Krule, Father John Misty, more welovegreen.fr

Bulmers Forbidden Fruit
6/2-4 // Dublin, Ireland
Justice, The War On Drugs, Bonobo, Vince Staples, Richie Hawtin Close,

Sounds of the Summer

Rainbow Kitten Surprise

BY RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA

"Music festivals changed my life," bassist Charlie Holt says wistfully. "I was a computer scientist, then I went to a music festival and I was like, 'I should be a musician.'" Holt and his band Rainbow Kitten Surprise are taking advantage of a rare free moment to chat about their new record, *How To: Friends, Love, Freefall*, between a taping of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and a performance at New York City's famed Electric Lady Studios. Undoubtedly, the quintet is facing the most consequential summer of their careers. After two firmly DIY albums—their first, *Seven + Mary*, was recorded in a dorm room, and their second, *RKS*, was made on a shoestring budget by students at their college—Rainbow Kitten Surprise signed with Elektra in early 2018 and scheduled appearances at major music festivals from Lollapalooza to Outside Lands. With roots in the rural South, the musicians are rookies on the festival scene, but they're used to being the underdogs.

"The album opener 'Mission to Mars' is mostly self-referential," singer Sam Melo says. "It's an exploration of our experience as a band making music in isolation. We live in Boone, N.C., which is a pretty small town, about three hours from the nearest city. [For a long time,] we were kind of making music in a vacuum."

On *How To: Friends, Love, Freefall*, the outfit—Melo, Holt, lead guitarist Ethan Goodpaster, guitarist/vocalist Darrick "Bozzy" Keller and drummer Jess Haney—triangulates the sounds of Jack White, Animal Collective and TV on the Radio, skating along the edges of indie and blues-rock before falling backward into psychedelia over and over again. It's delightful, thought-provoking and groovy, similar to Rainbow Kitten Surprise's much-lauded live show.

"We wanted to make a record that showcased the live show more than anything else and bridge the gap between what had previously been studio, or even bedroom, recordings in order to give it a more open-air feel," Melo says.

He goes on to describe how the group wanted to give their songs enough room to highlight each musician's unique approach. The breezy setting of East Nashville's church-turned-recording-studio Neon Cross did just that.

"Just having 200 guitars there to choose from, and having a producer who really knows what they're doing and engineers that are on top of everything, was a totally different experience for us," says Goodpaster. "And we had to change our mindset to match that. I think it really affected the album in a positive way."

With a clear creative vision, the band relied on Grammy-winning producer Jay Joyce to help channel their desires. On "Holy War," Melo says Joyce was able to recalibrate the song's structure and bring the best out of Haney. "He had Jess do this neo-soul beat with a swinging feel to it and it just totally changed the vibe," he recalls. Holt agrees: "It's satisfying to finally have the means, the technology and the equipment to get the sounds that we've been searching for, or [accomplish] ideas that we didn't necessarily know how to implement."

As for their summer tour, Rainbow Kitten Surprise couldn't be more excited to showcase their new arsenal of songs.

"You listen to music differently when you're at a music festival," Holt says. "You're hanging out with your friends. It's not a show; it's an environment."

The members of Rainbow Kitten Surprise are also quick to note how their own summer music experiences inform their stage show. The first time they performed at a festival was last year's Okeechobee in Florida. Laughing, they remember that they had to camp, so when it was time to perform they went straight from their tent to the stage. Holt also recalls a particularly formative experience seeing Jack White at Bonnaroo 2014.

"I think we all like being at music festivals," Melo adds. "It's one of those things that's not taken for granted. The culture of a music festival comes about over the course of three days. It's determined every minute, every hour—the interactions between people and how people are disposed to treating each other by staying open-minded and just sort of loving life. And it's an awesome thing to be a part of, so the energy that you bring to the stage is with the mindset that you're privileged to be partaking in this experience and helping shape it, just as everybody is."

You can catch Rainbow Kitten Surprise at Forecastle, Sloss Fest, Lollapalooza, Osheaga, Outside Lands, Velorama and elsewhere.

Matthew Salacuse

Grizzly Bear, Glass Animals, Four Tet, more forbiddenfruit.ie

Sweden Rock
6/6-9 // Sölvesborg, Sweden
Iron Maiden, Ozzy Osbourne, Judas Priest, Helloween, Stone Sour, Meshuggah, Heavy Load, Kreator, more swedenrock.com

Northside Festival
6/6-10 // Brooklyn, NY
Liz Phair, OSHUN, Madison McFerrin, Soccer Mommy, Snail Mail, Deerhoof, Sam Evian, Protomartyr, Dear Nora, more
northsidefestival.com

Greenfield
6/7-9 // Interlaken, Switzerland
Volbeat, The Prodigy, Limp Bizkit, Rise Against, The Offspring, Parkway Drive, Broilers, Bullet For My Valentine, more greenfieldfestival.ch

NorthSide
6/7-9 // Aarhus, Denmark
Björk, Queens of the Stone Age, The National, Beck, A Perfect Circle, Liam Gallagher, N.E.R.D., The War On Drugs, more northside.dk

NOS Primavera Sound
6/7-9 // Porto, Portugal
Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Lorde, A$AP Rocky, Tyler. the Creator, Jamie xx, The War On Drugs, Fever Ray, Arca, more
nosprimaverasound.com

R Bonnaroo
6/7-10 // Manchester, TN
Eminem, The Killers, Muse, Future, Bassnectar, Sturgill Simpson, Bon Iver, Khalid, alt-J, Sheryl Crow, STS9, Moon Taxi, Broken Social Scene, more bonnaroo.com

Carolina Country
6/7-10 // Myrtle Beach, SC
Luke Bryan, Toby Keith, Zac Brown Band, Cole Swindell, Old Dominion, Brett Eldredge, Kane Brown, Michael Ray, more
carolinacountrymusicfest.com

Disc Jam
6/7-10 // Stephentown, NY
Lotus, Beats Antique, Galactic, The Motet, Electron, Barber Acoustic, DJ Logic & Friends, Gubbulidis, more
discjammusicfestival.com

Cold Mountain Music at Lake Logan
6/8-9 // Canton, OH
Mandolin Orange, Jon Stickley Trio, The Broadcast, Shovels & Rope, River Whyless, The Steel Wheels, more coldmountainmusic.org

Huichica Sonoma
6/8-9 // Sonoma, CA
Wooden Shjips, Jonathan Richman,King Tuff, Fruit Bats,

Mountain Jam

Vetiver, Steve Gunn, Iceage, White Fence, more sonoma.huichica.com

Best Kept Secret
6/8-10 // Hilvarenbeek, Netherlands
Arctic Monkeys, LCD Soundsystem, The National, Angus & Julia Stone, CHVRCHES, Four Tet, Deer Hunter, Father John Misty, more
bestkeptsecret.nl

Download UK
6/8-10 // Leicestershire, United Kingdom
Avenged Sevenfold, Guns N' Roses, Ozzy Osbourne, Bullet For My Valentine, Black Stone Cherry, Marilyn Manson, more
downloadfestival.co.uk

Palisade Bluegrass and Roots
6/8-10 // Palisade, CO
Fruition, Junior Brown, Della Mae, The Kitchen Dwellers, Trout Steak Revival, Ghost of Paul Revere, Head for the Hills, more
palisademusic.com

Taste of Country
6/8-10 // Hunter, NY
Eric Church, Florida Georgia Line, Sam Hunt, Justin Moore, Dustin Lynch, LeAnn Rimes, Montgomery Gentry, more
tasteofcountryfestival.com

Central Jazz
6/9 // Central City, CO
Dragon Smoke, NOLA Central All-Stars, George Porter Jr. & Runnin Pardners, Adam Deitch Jazz Quartet, more centraljazz.co
Festival Facts: This brand-new fest brings the spirit of New Orleans to the Rocky Mountains, headlined by a couple of supergroups–Dragon Smoke (Eric Lindell, Dumpstaphunk's Ivan Neville and Galactic's rhythm section of Stanton Moore and Robert Mercurio) and the NOLA Central All-Stars, featuring the legendary George Porter Jr. and members of Dumpstaphunk. (Yes, that makes three bassists in one group.)

LaureLive
6/9-10 // Novelty, OH
Foster The People, Brandi Carlile, Fitz & The Tantrums, Cold War Kids, X Ambassadors, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, more
laurelive.com

Playboy Jazz Festival
6/9-10 // Los Angeles, CA
Lee Ritenour and Dave Grusin, Anthony Hamilton, Snarky Puppy, The Miles Electric Band, The Edmar Castaneda Quartet, more
hollywoodbowl.com/events/festivals

Buckeye Country Superfest
6/10-11 // Columbus, OH
Kenny Chesney, Zac Brown Band, Miranda Lambert, Keith Urban, Kip Moore, Billy Currington, Frankie Ballard, Jana Kramer, more
buckeyecountrysuperfest.com

Bergenfest
6/12-16 // Bergen, Norway
Queens of the Stone Age, Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, Father John Misty, Myra, James Bay, Lukas Graham, more bergenfest.no

Blue Ox
6/14-16 // Eau Claire, WI
Greensky Bluegrass, The Devil Makes Three, Sam Bush, Del McCoury Band, Margo Price, The Infamous Stringdusters, more
blueoxmusicfestival.com

Montebello Rockfest
6/14-16 // Montebello, Canada
Prophets of Rage, Weezer, Five Finger Death Punch, Godsmack, Tenacious D, A Day To Remember, Jimmy Eat World, more
montebellorockfest.com

Sónar
6/14-16 // Barcelona, Spain
Gorillaz, LCD Soundsystem, Diplo, Richie Hawtin, Bonobo, Laurent Garnier, Thom Yorke, Modeselektor, more sonar.es

Firefly
6/14-17 // Dover, DE
Eminem, Kendrick Lamar, Arctic Monkeys, The Killers, ODESZA, Lil Wayne, Logic, Martin Garrix, more
fireflyfestival.com

Mad Tea Party Jam
6/14-17 // Purcellville, VA
The Werks, Litz, Larry Keel Experience, Grass Is Dead, Dirty Grass Players, Of Tomorrow, more
themadteapartyjam.com

Nova Rock
6/14-17 // Nickelsdorf, Austria
Marilyn Manson, Avenged Sevenfold, The Prodigy, Volbeat, Billy Idol, Iron Maiden, Sunrise Avenue, Seiler & Speer, more novarock.at

Sonic Bloom
6/14-17 // Spanish Peaks Country, CO
Shpongle, Keys N Krates, Nightmares On Wax, Liquid Stranger, Eoto, Break Science, Desert Dwellers, Dirtwire, more sonicbloomfestival.com

Paradiso
6/15-16 // George, WA
Deadmau5, DJ Snake, Armin Van Buuren, Claude VonStroke, Gramatik, Louis the Child, The Crystal Method, more paradisofestival.com

Summerburst Stockholm
6/15-16 // Stockholm, Sweden
Axwell ^ Ingrosso, Diplo, Galantis, Martin Garrix, Benny Benassi, Dannic, Dubfire, Alan Walker, more
summerburst.se/stockholm

Country Summer
6/15-17 // Santa Rosa, CA
Florida Georgia Line, Little Big Town, Toby Keith, Maren Morris, Granger Smith, Tyler Farr, Joe Nichols, Eric Paslay, more countrysummer.com

R Mountain Jam
6/15-17 // Hunter, NY
Jack Johnson, Sturgill Simpson, alt-J, The War On Drugs, Portugal. The Man, Father John Misty, The Decemberists, Jenny Lewis, more
mountainjam.com
Festival Facts: As the overall American festival scene continues

Patrick Tewey

BRUCE HORNSBY & THE NOISEMAKERS

IRMA THOMAS, SOUL QUEEN OF NEW ORLEANS

KARL DENSON'S TINY UNIVERSE

JAIMOE'S JASSSZ BAND ▲ BADBADNOTGOOD ▲ TURKUAZ

CORY HENRY & THE FUNK APOSTLES ▲ GOGO PENGUIN

SAMMY MILLER AND THE CONGREGATION

NO BS! BRASS BAND ▲ NACHITO HERRERA TRIO - "A NIGHT IN HABANA"

POLYRHYTHMICS ▲ TYREE MORRIS AND THE HEARTS OF WORSHIP

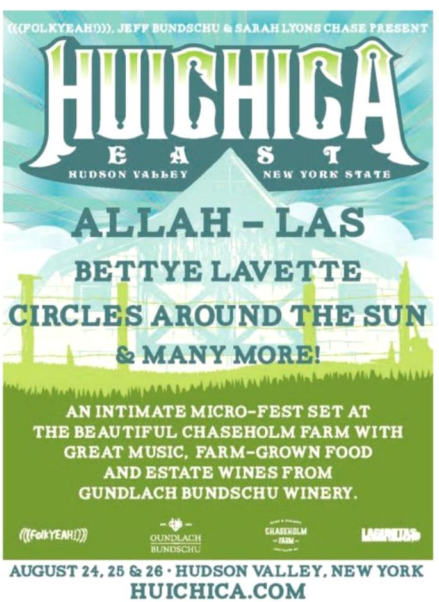
THE LAO TIZER QUARTET ▲ CRESCENT SUPER BAND

STILLWATER ALL-STARS ▲ J-CALVIN ▲ TELLURIDE STUDENT ALL-STARS JAZZ ENSEMBLE

THE HOOLIGAN BRASS BAND ▲ THE INEVITABLES ▲ THE MCCARTHY TRIO

THE SPEAKEASY JAZZ QUARTET ▲ TELLURIDE JAZZ ADVENTURE ACADEMY BAND

www.TELLURIDEJAZZ.ORG



18th Annual Festival Guide

to shift away from the classic jamband-focused lineups of yore and lean more toward eclectic rock and electronica, Mountain Jam's traditionally crunchy ethos has moved closer to the mainstream. But, while Warren Haynes is no longer involved in the weekend gathering, Mountain Jam remains an annual destination for a mix of hippie-inspired indie acts, Americana troubadours and other roots-oriented rockers.

Pinkpop
6/15-17 // Landgraaf, Netherlands
Pearl Jam, Foo Fighters, Bruno Mars, Snow Patrol, The Script, Editors, Oscar And The Wolf, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, more
pinkpop.nl

Taste of Randolph Street
6/15-17 // Chicago, IL
Allen Stone, The Devil Makes Three, Chicano Batman, Mayer Hawthorne, Trevor Hall, Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real, more
starevents.com/event/taste-of-randolph

ZIONTIFIC Summer Solstice
6/15-18 // Russell, MA
10 Ft Ganja Plant, Bumpin Uglies, Roots of Creation, The Elovaters, the Alchemystics, Double Tiger, more
ziontificproductions.com

Clearwater Festival
6/16-17 // Croton-on-Hudson, NY
Jeff Tweedy, The Mavericks, Ani DiFranco, Rhiannon Giddens, Hot Rize, Dave Alvin & Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Langhorne Slim, more
clearwaterfestival.org

Sled Island
6/20-24 // Calgary, Canada
Dirty Projectors, Deerhoof, Wye Oak, Shabazz Palaces, John Maus, Cherry Glazerr, Mount Eerie, Grouper, more
sledisland.com

Rock in Roma
6/20-7/14 // Rome, Italy
Roger Waters, The Killers, Post Malone, The Chemical Brothers, Macklemore, Hollywood Vampires, Jeff Beck, more
rockinroma.com

Country Fest
6/21-23 // Cadott, WI
Jason Aldean, Brad Paisley, Brantley Gilbert, Jake Owen, Brett Eldredge, Kip Moore, Dwight Yoakam, more
countryfest.com

4 Peaks
6/21-24 // Bend, OR
Greensky Bluegrass, Nahko & Medicine For The People, North Mississippi Allstars, The New Mastersounds, Poor Man's Whisky, more
4peaksmusic.com

Graspop Metal Meeting
6/21-24 // Dessel, Belgium
Guns N' Roses, Iron Maiden, Volbeat, Ozzy Osbourne, Avenged Sevenfold, Judas Priest, A Perfect Circle, Marilyn Manson, more
graspop.be

I-Days
6/21-24 // Milan, Italy
The Killers, Liam Gallagher, Pearl Jam, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, Paul Kalkbrenner, Queens of the Stone Age, more
idays.it

Isle Of Wight
6/21-24 // Newport, United Kingdom
Kasabian, Depeche Mode, The Killers, The Script, Liam Gallagher, Manic Street Preachers, Van Morrison, Nile Rodgers & Chic, more
isleofwightfestival.com

Secret Solstice
6/21-24 // Reykjavik, Iceland
Slayer, Stormzy, Gucci Mane, Clean Bandit, Bonnie Tyler, Death From Above, George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, more
secretsolstice.is

Telluride Bluegrass
6/21-24 // Telluride, CO
Tedeschi Trucks Band, Greensky Bluegrass, Leftover Salmon, Sturgill Simpson, The Del McCoury Band, Emmylou Harris, Sam Bush Band, more
bluegrass.com/telluride

Electric Forest
6/21-24; 6/28-7/1 // Rothbury, MI
The String Cheese Incident, Bassnectar, GRiZ, Rüfüs Du Sol, ZHU, Bonobo, Chromeo, Cut Copy, more
electricforestfestival.com

Azkena Rock
6/22-23 // Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
Van Morrison, Joan Jett & The Blackhearts, MC50, Mott The Hoople, Chris Robinson Brotherhood, more
azkenarockfestival.com

Funhouse Fest
6/22-23 // Williamsburg, VA
Alison Krauss, Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers, Bruce Hornsby & The Virginia Symphony Orchestra, The Wood Brothers, more
funhousefest.com

Body & Soul
6/22-24 // Westmeath, Ireland
Fever Ray, Chronixx, Jon Hopkins, Baxter Dury, James Holden & The Animal Spirits, Shamir, Son Lux, more
bodyandsoul.ie

Sounds of the Summer

CHVRCHES

BY EMILY ZEMLER

The title of CHVRCHES' third album, *Love Is Dead*, may sound stark and foreboding, but the Scottish trio—Lauren Mayberry, Iain Cook and Martin Doherty—don't necessarily mean it that way.

"It's more about where we are in the world at the moment," Mayberry says, calling from New York, where the band has relocated to from Glasgow. "I want people to interpret it differently. It can either be this jarring statement, or you can think there's an ellipses or a question mark on the end."

The album follows the group's two prior LPs, 2013's *The Bones of What You Believe* and 2015's *Every Open Eye*, both of which earned them sizeable acclaim. Although the musicians didn't necessarily come into *Love Is Dead* with a set of specific intentions, they did want to push forward from those two releases and evolve. They began writing in early 2017, working in a rehearsal space in New York, hoping to solidify some ideas before enlisting outside producers. "Because the first two records came so close together, it almost felt like those two records existed as a couplet," Mayberry notes. "This time, it was more about figuring out where we were."

The band met with several producers, but ultimately connected best with Greg Kurstin and spent over a month with him in his Los Angeles studio. He sat at the helm for nine of the tracks on *Love Is Dead*. (The musicians later worked with Steve Mac on "Miracle" and also produced three tracks themselves.) Kurstin helped guide the musicians into new places—exactly what they'd wanted.

"We were always looking for someone to amplify the chemistry we have and improve what we were already doing," Doherty says. "Or even to intensify what we were already doing. Having Greg in the room—or having anyone in the room—had to feel totally natural. It had to feel like another member of the band. We had enough experience with potential collaborators that we knew it felt special with Greg. It was the dynamic we'd been looking for."

"He has a great understanding of melody and arrangements, but he has a way of quietly leading people and knowing how to fit into a situation," Mayberry adds. "Most of the time, it doesn't even feel like he's telling you to do something or waiting for an idea to happen. It was almost like you didn't really realize what was happening."

One of the central goals with *Love Is Dead* was to keep things feeling as spontaneous and live as possible. Mayberry didn't write many of the lyrics ahead of time. Instead, she brought in a notebook filled with phrases and thoughts, and dug through the pages whenever she needed inspiration. Doherty and Cook encouraged her and even pointed to things that had been crossed out as possible lyrics. It was the first time Mayberry felt comfortable enough with her bandmates to be that vulnerable and open. One of the tracks, a buoyant synth-pop number called "Deliverance," found its first verse written in only 15 minutes. Much of the rest of the album was similarly impulsive.

"It's almost like you're tricking yourself into not being so conscious, and then you just choose something that feels guttural," Mayberry says. "It means that it's something you felt in the back of your head or in your heart in that moment, and then you write about whatever that is afterward. It makes things more honest, in a way."

Several of the songs, particularly "Never Say Die," took Doherty by surprise, which he feels is a positive sign. "Everything that we do is pretty spontaneous in terms how we write together," he says. "Being surprised by what you do is often the sign of a healthy, creative dynamic. It means you're in the moment and you're not afraid to take a few risks."

As Mayberry adds, "There were moments on this record that definitely felt like us, but also felt like something we hadn't done yet. We felt like we discovered something new, but it was still part of the band."

The album is filled with layers of dynamic sound, like on the single "Get Out," and emotional tracks like "Really Gone." It's the sort of record that looks deeply at the state of the world (hence its title) and then looks inward. The songs feel like they will be even greater live, especially now that the band has enlisted a live drummer for the first time. Mayberry isn't sure whether she really figured anything out in making *Love Is Dead*, but she's glad she's asking the right questions.

"It's just about the confusion and the frustration that I feel," she explains. "When you sit with that weight and that heaviness, what do you do with it? A lot of the record is trying to figure that out. And I don't have an answer with a nice bow on it. But sometimes investigating it is half the battle."

Despite all that heaviness, the members of CHVRCHES aren't sitting around, wallowing in their feelings. This album was created from a positive place by people who were happy to be together in the studio. Doherty, who calls their month with Kurstin "an incredibly fruitful time," has changed his mind about the cliché that art has to come from a feeling of impending darkness.

"It's important that you're having fun in the studio," he says. "I used to think that my best work came from a place of intensity and it took me a long time to realize that it's the opposite. I need to feel happy, excited and engaged when in the studio. That's where my best stuff comes from. It was very much like that when we were in with Greg. You can still make emotional music or dark music if you channel it, but I think you have to be in certain state of mind to see what kind of work you have."

"So much of what I write is about how I feel about things, whether it's something that happened to me or that I see in passing," Mayberry says. "I have to do this because, otherwise, all those feelings sit inside my body. But if you're in the cycle of that kind of emotional overload when you're trying to write it, then it's quite difficult to process it. So it's like it has to come in waves, where you feel something, and then there's an opportunity to create with that feeling. Now that we look back on the record, it's very genuine. We needed to say this at a certain point."

You can catch CHVRCHES at Biggest Weekend, Primavera, Governors Ball, Best Kept Secret, Hurricane, TRNSMT, Fuji Rock, Lollapalooza, Hinterland, Outside Lands, Electric Picnic and elsewhere.

Danny Ohnch

High Sierra

Bonanza Campout
6/22-24 // Heber, UT
Halsey, Wiz Khalifa, ZHU, Phantogram, Local Natives, Rüfüs Du Sol, Børns, Oh Wonder, more
bonanzacampout.com

Ithaca Reggae Fest
6/22-24 // Ithaca, NY
Clinton Fearon, Sister Carol, The Meditations, Double Tiger, more
ithacareggaefest.com

Hellfest
6/22-24 // Clisson, France
Avenged Sevenfold, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Hollywood Vampires, Deftones, Marilyn Manson, Alice In Chains, more
hellfest.fr

Hurricane
6/22-24 // Scheeßel, Germany
Arctic Monkeys, Arcade Fire, The Prodigy, Billy Talent, Marteria, Kraftklub, Broilers, Justice, Biffy Clyro, more
hurricane.de

Sierra Nevada World Music
6/22-24 // Boonville, CA
Beres Hammond, Steel Pulse, Tarrus Riley, Teddy Afro, Dread Mary, Cocoa Tea, Protoje, Max Romeo, more
snwmf.com

Southside
6/22-24 // Neuhausen, Germany
Arctic Monkeys, Arcade Fire, The Prodigy, Billy Talent, Marteria, Kraftklub, Broilers, Justice, Biffy Clyro, more
southside.de
Festival Facts: No, that's not a mistake–Southside and Hurricane (just a couple listings above) are sister festivals that take place on the same weekend in June each year, offering the same strong lineups to German music lovers in the northern (Hurricane) and southern (Southside) parts of the country.

JAS June Experience
6/22-30 // Aspen, CO
Lizz Wright, Leslie Odom Jr, Lyle Lovett and His Large Band, Georgia On My Mind: A Tribute to Ray Charles, more
jazzaspensnowmass.org

Tilted Earth
6/23 // Cornville, AZ
Pierce Edens, Greyhounds, The Suffers, PK Gregory, more
tiltedearthfestival.com

Arroyo Seco
6/23-24 // Pasadena, CA
Neil Young + Promise of the Real, Jack White, Kings Of Leon, Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters, Gary Clark Jr., more
arroyosecoweekend.com
Festival Facts: Even as it prepares for its sophomore year, Southern California's Arroyo Seco has already proved to be a festival committed to multigenerational icons, confirmed by its inclusion of legends like Neil Young and Robert Plant, along with younger guns like Jack White and Gary Clark Jr.

Mamby on the Beach
6/23-24 // Chicago, IL
Common, Spoon, Grizzly Bear, Russ, Cold War Kids, Gorgon City, Tune-Yards, Oh Wonder, St. Lucia, more
mambybeach.com

InMusic
6/25-27 // Zagreb, Croatia
Queens of the Stone Age, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Interpol, David Byrne, Alice In Chains, St. Vincent, Portugal. The Man, more
inmusicfestival.com/en

Hideout
6/25-29 // Novalja, Croatia
Jamie Jones, Alan Fitzpatrick, Kerri Chandler, Heidi, Andy C, Eats Everything, Horse Meat Disco, Cristoph, more
hideoutfestival.com

Volt
6/26-30 // Sopron, Hungary
Depeche Mode, Iron Maiden, Avenged Sevenfold, Limp Bizkit, Hurts, Steve Aoki, The Kills, X Ambassadors, more
volt.hu

ROMP
6/27-30 // Owensboro, KY
Alison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder, Sam Bush, Rhiannon Giddens, Leftover Salmon, The Travelin' McCourys, more
rompfest.com

Summerfest
6/27-7/1 & 7/3-8 // Milwaukee, WI
Imagine Dragons, James Taylor, Bonnie Raitt, Dave Matthews Band, J. Cole, Halsey, Logic, Florida Georgia Line, more
summerfest.com

Love International
6/27-7/4 // Tisno, Croatia
Ben UFO, Bicep, DJ Tennis, Floating Points, Four Tet, Horse Meat Disco, Move D, Palms Trax, more
loveinternationalfestival.com

Beanstalk
6/28-30 // Bond, CO
The Magic Beans, Horseshoes & Hand Grenades, Aqueous, Octave Cat, Ghost Light, Cory Wong, Eminence Ensemble, more
beanstalkfestival.com

Download Madrid
6/28-30 // Madrid, Spain
Avenged Sevenfold, Marilyn Manson, A Perfect Circle, Rise Against, Kreator, Pennywise, Arch Enemy, Exhorder, more
downloadfestival.es

Frendly Gathering
6/28-30 // Sugarbush, VT
Twiddle, Greensky Bluegrass, The Devil Makes Three, Nahko and the Medicine for the People, Kamasi Washington, more
frendlygathering.com

NYS Blues Festival
6/28-30 // Syracuse, NY
Anders Osborne, Paulie Cerra, Larkin Poe, C.J. Chenier & The Red Hot Louisiana Band, Bruce Katz Band, A.J. Ghent, more
nysbluesfest.com

Provinssi
6/28-30 // Seinäjoki, Finland
Volbeat, Asking Alexandria, French Montana, Basement, Run The Jewels, Prophets of Rage, Arch Enemy, Biffy Clyro, more
provinssi.fi

Tinderbox
6/28-30 // Odense, Denmark
Alanis Morissette, Depeche Mode, French Montana, Iggy Pop, Jack White, Prophets of Rage, Tiësto, Wiz Khalifa, more
tinderbox.dk

Garorock
6/28-7/1 // Marmande, France
Indochine, DJ Snake, Macklemore, Marilyn Manson, MGMT, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Orelsan, Nina Kraviz, more
garorock.com

OpenAir St. Gallen
6/28-7/1 // St. Gallen, Switzerland
Editors, Depeche Mode, Nine Inch Nails, First Aid Kit, Jess Glynne, The Blaze, The Killers, Portugal. The Man, more
openairsg.ch

Vida
6/28-7/1 // Barcelona, Spain
Franz Ferdinand, Calexico, Iron & Wine, Of Montreal, St. Vincent, The Crab Apples, Marem Ladson, Elvis Perkins, more
vidafestival.com

Down the Rabbit Hole
6/29-7/1 // Beuningen, Netherlands
Queens of the Stone Age, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, David Byrne, more
downtherabbithole.nl

TRNSMT
6/29-7/1; 7/7-8 // Glasgow, United Kingdom
Arctic Monkeys, The Killers, Queen + Adam Lambert, Interpol, Stereophonics, Liam Gallagher, CHVRCHES, Franz Ferdinand, more
trnsmtfest.com

Montreux Jazz
6/29-7/14 // Montreux, Switzerland
Jack White, Nine Inch Nails, Deep Purple, Portugal. The Man, Aloe Blacc, Iggy Pop, Roosevelt Collier, more
montreuxjazzfestival.com

Awakenings
6/30-7/1 // Amsterdam, Netherlands
Carl Cox, Adam Beyer, Chris Liebing, Jamie Jones, Maceo Plex, Nina Kraviz, Ben Klock, Henrik Schwarz, more
awakeningsfestival.nl

Roskilde
6/30-7/7 // Roskilde, Denmark
Eminem, Bruno Mars, Gorillaz, Nine Inch Nails, Cardi B, David Byrne, Khalid, Nephew, more
roskilde-festival.dk

Worldwide
6/30-7/8 // Sète, France
Four Tet, DJ Krush, Flo Real, Andrés, Moodymann, Ben UFO, Juliana Molina, BADBADNOTGOOD, more
worldwidefestival.com

Willie Nelson's 4th of July Picnic
7/4 // Austin, TX
Willie Nelson & Family, Sturgill Simpson, The Head and the Heart, Ryan Bingham, Margo Price, Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real, more
thecircuit.com/events

Open'er
7/4-7 // Gdynia, Poland
Gorillaz, Bruno Mars, Depeche Mode, Arctic Monkeys, Migos, Massive Attack, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Fleet Foxes, more
opener.pl

Balaton Sound
7/4-8 // Zamárdi, Hungary
The Chainsmokers, David Guetta, Dimitri Vega & Like Mike, Martin Garrix, DJ Snake, Rita Ora, Big Sean, Ty Dolla Sign, more
balatonsound.com

25TH ANNUAL

TELLURIDE BLUES & BREWS FESTIVAL

TELLURIDE, COLORADO

ROBERT PLANT
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BOOKER T'S STAX REVUE ★ JJ GREY & MOFRO ★ ANDERS OSBORNE

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WWW.TELLURIDEBLUES.COM

Camp Bisco

Electric Love
7/5-7 // Plainfeld, Austria
Armin Van Buuren, Axwell ^ Ingrosso, Steve Aoki, Rudimental, CamelPhat, Noisecontrollers, Slushii, more electriclove.at

Pohoda
7/5-7 // Trenín, Slovakia
The Chemical Brothers, Jamie Cullum, St. Vincent, Ziggy Marley, Glass Animals, Danny Brown, Rodriguez, Ride, more pohodafestival.sk

Blissfields
7/5-8 // Woodmancott, United Kingdom
Gold Panda, Slamboree, Dub Pistols, Baxter Dury, Mr Jukes, A Skillz, Aktive, Beans On Toast, BMotion, more blissfields.co.uk

Common Ground
7/5-8 // Lansing, MI
Halsey, Logic, Gucci Mane, Kip Moore, Børns, NF, Hunter Hayes, Kevin Gates, more commongroundfest.com

R High Sierra
7/5-8 // Quincy, CA
The String Cheese Incident, Sturgill Simpson, Grace Potter, Chris Robinson Brotherhood, Lettuce, The Wood Brothers, more highsierramusic.com

Les Eurockéennes
7/5-8 // Belfort, France
Queens of the Stone Age, Nine Inch Nails, Macklemore, Prophets of Rage, Liam Gallagher, Orelsan, Rick Ross, more eurockeennes.fr

Nass
7/5-8 // Bristol, United Kingdom
Dizzee Rascal, Run DMC, Damian Marley, De La Soul, Stefflon Don, Bugzy Malone, Vic Mensa, Andy C, more nassfestival.com

Noisily
7/5-8 // Leicester, United Kingdom
Patrice Baumel, Roni Size, Tristan, Oliver Koletzki, Stanton Warriors, Hatzler, Grouch, Black Sun Empire, more noisilyfestival.com

Rock Werchter
7/5-8 // Werchter, Belgium
Pearl Jam, Jack White, Arctic Monkeys, Gorillaz, Nine Inch Nails, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Queens of the Stone Age, David Byrne, more rockwerchter.be
Festival Facts: One of the European summer fests to watch out for annually, the Belgium celebration will offer another home-run list of headliners, starting with a rock-and-roll dream trio of Pearl Jam, Jack White and the resurfaced Arctic Monkeys.

Winnipeg Folk
7/5-8 // Winnipeg, Canada
Sheryl Crow, Bahamas, Courtney Barnett, The Strumbellas, Elle King, John Butler Trio, Whitney, Hiss Golden Messenger, more winnipegfolkfestival.ca

Festival d'été de Québec
7/5-15 // Québec City, Canada
Neil Young, Dave Matthews Band, The Weekend, Foo Fighters, Beck, Lorde, The Chainsmokers, Sturgill Simpson, more infofestival.com

Ottawa Bluesfest
7/5-15 // Ottawa, Canada
Beck, Sturgill Simpson, Dave Matthews Band, Foo Fighters, Courtney Barnett, M. Ward, Chromeo, The War On Drugs, more ottawabluesfest.ca

80/35
7/6-7 // Des Moines, IA
Kesha, Phantogram, Courtney Barnett, Atmosphere, Car Seat Headrest, Phoebe Bridgers, Vagabon, more 80-35.com

Eaux Claires
7/6-7 // Eau Claire, WI
Lineup TBA
eauxclaires.com

Essence
7/6-8 // New Orleans, LA
Janet Jackson, Mary J. Blige, Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, Miguel, The Roots, Snoop Dogg, Kelela, more essence.com/festival

Great Blue Heron
7/6-8 // Sherman, NY
Donna the Buffalo, The Felice Brothers, Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad, Bobby Henrie and the Goners, more greatblueheron.com

Main Square
7/6-8 // Arras, France
Depeche Mode, Jamiroquai, Queens of the Stone Age, Liam Gallagher, Justice, Portugal. The Man, The Breeders, more mainsquarefestival.fr

Ruisrock
7/6-8 // Turku, Finland
The Chainsmokers, Cheek, Rae Sremmurd, Tyler. the Creator, Alan Walker, Lil Xan, Silvana Imam, more ruisrock.fi

Wireless
7/6-8 // London, United Kingdom
DJ Khaled, Stormzy, J. Cole, Migos, Post Malone, Rae Sremmurd, J Hus, Big Sean, Giggs, more wirelessfestival.co.uk

Beauregard
7/6-9 // Normandie, France
Jack White, MGMT, Soulwax, Macklemore, X Ambassadors, Depeche Mode, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, more festivalbeauregard.com

Cavendish Beach
7/6-9 // Cavendish, Canada
Luke Bryan, Shawn Mendes, Chris Young, Brett Eldredge, Jon Pardi, Dan + Shay, Dallas Smith, Chase Rice, more cavendishbeachmusic.com

British Summer Time
7/6-7/15 // Hyde Park, United Kingdom
Roger Waters, The Cure, Eric Clapton, Paul Simon, Bruno Mars, Michael Bublé, Interpol, Van Morrison, Santana, James Taylor, more bst-hydepark.com
Festival Facts: Less of a traditional fest and more of a series of once-in-a-lifetime concert offerings, BST 2018 will boast all-star groupings like folk legends Paul Simon and James Taylor (part of Simon's farewell world tour) and multigenerational guitar heroes Eric Clapton, Santana, Steve Winwood and Gary Clark Jr., plus The Cure's only European show of 2018.

Breckenridge Brewery Hootenanny
7/7 // Littleton, CO
Mike Gordon, Hard Working Americans, Billy Strings, Drew Emmitt/Andy Thorn & Friends, The Sweet Lillies, more breckbrew.com

Levitate
7/7-8 // Marshfield, MA
Trey Anastasio Band, The Head and the Heart, Slightly Stoopid, Rebelution, Lake Street Dive, Greensky Bluegrass, more levitatemusicfestival.com

Fresh Island
7/10-12 // Novalja, Croatia
Wiz Khalifa, PARTYNEXTDOOR, Lil Pump, J Hus, Vince Staples, Goldlink, Tim Westwood, more fresh-island.org

Resurrection Fest
7/11-14 // Viveiro, Spain
Kiss, Scorpions, Prophets of Rage, Ghost, Megadeath, Stone Sour, Ministry, At The Gates, more resurrectionfest.es

Dour
7/11-15 // Dour, Belgium
alt-J, Tyler. the Creator, The Chemical Brothers, Big Boi, Action Bronson, Diplo, Slowdive, ODESZA, more dourfestival.eu/en

2000trees
7/12-14 // Cheltenham, United Kingdom
Enter Shikari, At the Drive In, Frightened Rabbit, Hell Is for Heroes, Creeper, Basement, My Vitriol, more twothousandtreesfestival.co.uk

Bilbao BBK Live
7/12-14 // Bilbao, Spain
Florence & the Machine, The xx, Gorillaz, alt-J, Childish Gambino, The Chemical Brothers, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, David Byrne, more bilbaobbklive.com/en

Camp Bisco
7/12-14 // Scranton, PA
The Disco Biscuits, Bassnectar, Excision, Tipper, Bonobo, Illenium, Lotus, STS9, Lettuce, Papadosio, TAUK, more campbisco.com

Camp Euforia
7/12-14 // Lone Tree, IA
Eufórquestra, Fruition, Middle Western, Miles Nielsen & The Rusted Hearts, Chicago Afrobeat Project, more campeuforia.com

Cruïlla
7/12-14 // Barcelona, Spain
Jack White, Prophets of Rage, N.E.R.D., Kygo, Justice, The Roots, David Byrne, Orbital, Damian Marley, more cruillabarcelona.com/en

Mad Cool
7/12-14 // Madrid, Spain
Pearl Jam, Arctic Monkeys, Jack White, Depeche Mode, Queens of the Stone Age, Tame Impala, Fleet Foxes, Leon Bridges, more madcoolfestival.es/en
Festival Facts: Each year, some of the bigger European summer festival lineups seem to blow away their counterparts from across the pond. And this year, Mad Cool is more than included in that conversation, boasting some of the biggest gets of the 2018 season.

Jesse Fiaitz

Sounds of the Summer

Pigeons Playing Ping Pong

BY RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA

"Let's play this show like it's Madison Square Garden." In their early days, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong would recite this mantra before basement concerts and college bar gigs. It was a way to psych themselves up, but also a goal to shoot for. "That's always been the pinnacle example of what a real concert can be," says singer/guitarist Greg Ormont.

While headlining the world's most famous arena is still on their to-do list, the quartet did technically break the contact barrier on March 23, playing a Knicks halftime show for a crowd of over 18,000 sports fans. "But I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous for Madison Square Garden," Ormont admits with a laugh.

In concert, Ormont's onstage alter ego "Scrambled Greg," plays off of lead guitarist Jeremy Schon's mellow demeanor. The two longtime friends are the classic one-two punch: a showman on vocal duties and a virtuoso on lead guitar. Anchored by the rumbling low-end of bassist Ben Carrey and the hyped-up drum solos of Alex "Gator" Petropulos, the members of Pigeons Playing Ping Pong possess a sense of reckless abandon onstage, yet they are driven by their insatiable work ethic. Even lighting designer Manny Newman attends band rehearsals, to be sure that his live improvisations sync with their ever-evolving jams. Through it all, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong have one true goal, as Ormont sings on a fan-favorite track: to "put the 'fun' in funk."

"A huge thing for us, since day one, is we need to connect to the audience," Schon says. "We need to give them our all, whether we're playing to five people at a crappy dive bar or at Madison Square Garden. We're music fans first, just like everyone who comes out to see our show. We're all cut from the same cloth."

A few days after they play MSG, Ormont and Schon are still reeling from the experience, but they are also already focused on their next marquee moment. Domefest, the band's music festival, is just a couple of months away and, as co-curators of the event, every small detail needs their approval.

"Domefest is our favorite distraction," Ormont says. Today, he's scheduling workshops, which will be led by a number of friends and colleagues in the band's ever-widening network. Meanwhile, Schon is going over graphics for live releases and plotting out wristband designs. These, he notes, are just two of the "18 other things" he still needs to do.

Schon first conceived the festival in the band's early days when they were gigging around the University of Maryland and, like PPPP itself, Domefest has grown incrementally; what started as a one-day event with 400 people, now includes over 20 bands with an estimated crowd of 1,500.

This year, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong will play five full sets at the ninth-annual gathering. "We had the first Domefest on May 1, 2010. It was the best day of my entire life," Schon gushes. "It was, by far, the coolest thing I'd ever accomplished and it was just amazing seeing what we pulled together."

But it hasn't always been easy. After his original partner moved on to other projects, Schon ran the festival alone for two years, which, he admits, was "too much for one person to handle while keeping their sanity." That's when he enlisted Ormont as a co-curator. Apart from being a member of Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, the singer had a special affinity for Domefest—it was his first music festival.

"Experiencing Domefest as my first festival is really all the drive I'll ever need to pour myself into future Domefests," Ormont says. "We've had some amazing things happen at Domefest, including engagements, weddings and bachelor parties—all of the things associated with love and appreciation of music. It's just really exciting that this year's going to be the biggest one yet."

It's already been a banner 12-month stretch for the quartet. Ormont jokes that he has to write a new bucket list because he's checked off so many life goals already. They played their first Lockn' last summer, made their first Jam Cruise appearance earlier this year, and eagerly look forward to their Red Rocks debut opening for moe. this July. The ensemble released their fourth studio LP *Pizazz* in October, which offers a focused blend of fun-filled lyrics and funk-laden jams.

But the group's beginnings were much humbler. On his first day at the University of Maryland, Ormont wandered around his dorm with an acoustic guitar, looking for new friends. After a fun, but forgettable, rendition of Old Crow Medicine Show's "Wagon Wheel" with another classmate, he walked across the hall and met Schon. "We started jamming and goofing around and started making silly songs, which eventually led to us playing open-mic nights," he recalls. In time, the duo put together a solid repertoire, including "No Woman/No Farmhouse," a Bob Marley/Phish mash-up that gained them a decent amount of "dorm fame."

Nevertheless, their first gig under the Pigeons Playing Ping Pong banner wasn't exactly a barn burner. At the Santa Fe Cafe in College Park, Md., Ormont sang while Schon played acoustic guitar. They performed covers of hits like "Billie Jean," and they still laugh about the audience's reaction. "There was this screen that you could text comments to [and they would be displayed live]," Ormont remembers. Their most memorable critique? "'If I had to choose between earplugs and a gun, I'd choose the gun.' And that's what we saw while we were playing our first show. Again, I thought it was hilarious. I remember laughing about it because it was so intense and we're like, 'This is a dorm thing, don't stress out about it.'"

And that continues to be Pigeons Playing Ping Pong's essence. Since day one, they just want to have fun. Over time, they have fostered not just a fanbase, but "The Flock," a group of followers who travel to shows, make fan art and go bonkers over setlists. The Flock even funded *Pizazz* via Kickstarter, a release that, in the band's eyes, is a commercial success and a creative breakthrough.

"The live music experience is everything to us," Schon says. "It's why Domefest exists; it's really why our band exists and why we can play Madison Square Garden, Red Rocks, Jam Cruise, two nights at 9:30 Club. We really owe it all to The Flock for supporting us and giving us the chance to make this all a reality."

You can catch Pigeons Playing Ping Pong at Domefest, Summer Camp, Bonnaroo, Road Jam, High Sierra, Great South Bay, Peach, Tumble Down, Werk Out, Lockn' and elsewhere this summer.

Be Radically Kind

By Taraleigh Weathers

8 tips for a healthy, happy festival experience

1) You know those large bottles that normally sit on top of a water cooler? Bring one of those per person for the weekend. How much should you drink each day? On a normal day you should divide how much you weigh (in pounds) by two and that's the number of ounces you should consume. It's recommended that you add 12 ounces of water to your daily intake for every 30 minutes of exercise. Dancing and long walks to and from your tent means you have to drink more. Pro tip: Bring a reusable bottle.

2) Be prepared with healthy meals and snacks. Foods that require little to no preparation when it's showtime—sandwiches, salads, cucumbers, hummus, hard boiled eggs, cheese and crackers, fruit, olives and peanut butter—are key. Patronize vendors that provide nutritious foods. Bonus: Go healthy most of the time and a little fried something won't hurt.

3) Don't party like there's no tomorrow every night. Before you enjoy a beverage, take a couple of deep breaths and think about what your intention is. It's easy to get caught up in the habit of always consuming party favors if you aren't paying attention.

4) With amazing late-night bands and yoga classes in the morning, there's little chance that you'll get the same amount of sleep as you do at home, but take some time to rest up. Music festivals are noisy at all hours of the night, and your head might not hit your pillow until the sun comes up—pack earplugs and a sleep mask.

5) Your muscles may feel sore from lactic acid pooling in there from overuse, which can cause pain. Festivals and multi-night show runs are recipes for this. To ease sore muscles, stretch them. Do this first thing in the morning, before bed, in the porta-potty line and while waiting to go through security.

6) Glitter and glow sticks are environmental hazards and are also banned at many music venues and festivals. Biodegradable glitter is now available online on sites such as Etsy. As for glow sticks, don't buy them.

7) Bring clothes for all weather conditions. Be over-prepared. Pro-tip: Bring a lot of socks and extra shoes. Having dry feet changes everything!

8) Running a festival is an intense business where things go wrong all the time. Don't freak out at the volunteers or staff. They're doing their best. See someone who's had too much of something or is lost? Help them. Be radically kind.

NOS Alive
7/12-14 // Oeiras, Portugal
Arctic Monkeys, Nine Inch Nails, Snow Patrol, Khalid, Friendly Fires, Wolf Alice, Sampha, DJ Glue, more
nosalive.com/en

Rock Fest
7/12-14 // Cadott, WI
Disturbed, Incubus, Godsmack, Rise Against, A Day to Remember, Halestorm, Seether, Bush, Dee Snider, more rock-fest.com

California WorldFest
7/12-15 // Grass Valley, CA
Galactic, Trevor Hall, Samantha Fish, Anoushka Shankar, Mike Love, Teskey Brothers, Niyaz fest. Azam Ali, more worldfest.net

Country Thunder Saskatchewan
7/12-15 // Craven, Canada
Luke Bryan, Dierks Bentley, Big & Rich, Chris Young, Chris Janson, Dean Brody, Midland, Clay Walker, more countrythunder.com/sk

EXIT
7/12-15 // Novi Sad, Serbia
Grace Jones, David Guetta, Migos, Fever Ray, LP, Ziggy Marley, Alice Merton, Maceo Plex, Madball, Nina Kraviz, more
exitfest.org/en

Great South Bay
7/12-15 // Patchogue, NY
Umphrey's McGee, The Dickey Betts Band, Hot Tuna, Sublime with Rome, The Front Bottoms, Little Feat, Dirty Heads, more
greatsouthbaymusicfestival.com

Hodag Country
7/12-15 // Rhinelander, WI
Clint Black, Cole Swindell, Toby Keith, Neal McCoy, Midland, Locash, Brett Young, Chris Janson, Carly Pearce, more
hodag.com

Musilac
7/12-15 // Aix-les-Bains, France
Depeche Mode, Franz Ferdinand, Deep Purple, Indochine, Shaka Ponk, I AM, MC Solaar, Orelsan, more
musilac.com

Lovebox
7/13-14 // London, United Kingdom
Childish Gambino, Skepta, N.E.R.D., SZA, Diplo, Annie Mac, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Vince Staples, more
loveboxfestival.com

Master Musicians
7/13-14 // Somerset, KY
John Prine, Amanda Shires, JD McPherson, Felice Brothers, The Dead South, Arlo, McKinley and The Lonesome Sound, more
mastermusiciansfestival.org

Cornbury
7/13-15 // Oxfordshire, United Kingdom
Alanis Morissette, UB40, Squeeze, Mavis Staples, Caro Emerald, Deacon Blue, Zucchero, Jimmy Cliff, more cornburyfestival.com

R Forecastle
7/13-15 // Louisville, KY
Chris Stapleton, Arcade Fire, Modest Mouse, Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, Houndmouth, The War On Drugs, Father John Misty, Courtney Barnett, more forecastlefest.com
Festival Facts: As always, the Kentucky festival offers a welcome mix of alternative-country artists—this year, Chris Stapleton and Jason Isbell—along with indie-rock stalwarts like Arcade Fire and Modest Mouse, with some local love in the form of Louisville darlings Houndmouth.

Green River
7/13-15 // Greenfield, MA
Michael Franti & Spearhead, Old Crow Medicine Show, Dr. Dog, Josh

Britt Nemeth

Ritter, I'm With Her, Deer Tick, Robert Earl Keen, more
greenriverfestival.com

Latitude
7/13–15 // Suffolk, United Kingdom
The Killers, Solange, alt-J, Belle and Sebastian, The Vaccines, Wolf Alice, Rag'n'Bone Man, Jessie Ware, Mogwai, more
latitudefestival.com

Longitude
7/13–15 // Dublin, Ireland
Solange, Travis Scott, J. Cole, Migos, Diplo, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Tyler. the Creator, more longitude.ie

Melt!
7/13–15 // Ferropolis, Germany
The xx, Florence + The Machine, Fever Ray, Tyler. the Creator, Nina Kraviz, Mura Masa, ODESZA, more
meltfestival.de/en

Pleasantville
7/14 // Pleasantville, NY
Lineup TBA
pleasantvillemusicfestival.com

RIDE
7/14–15 // Telluride, CO
The String Cheese Incident, Sheryl Crow, Grace Potter, Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Chris Robinson Brotherhood, ZZ Ward, more
ridefestival.com
Festival Facts: Sometimes lost in the impressive list of events that take place in stunningly gorgeous Telluride, Colo., the annual RIDE festival offers an eclectic mix of top-notch artists, leaning toward roots music with a rock-and-roll bent.

Sloss
7/14–15 // Birmingham, AL
Chris Stapleton, Arcade Fire, Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, GRiZ, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, Vance Joy, The War On Drugs, more
slossfest.com

Paléo
7/17–22 // Nyon, Switzerland
Depeche Mode, The Killers, Gorillaz, Indochine, Orlesan, Lenny Kravitz, Bigflo & Oli, Jamel Debbouze, more
yeah.paleo.ch/en

Colours of Ostrava
7/18–21 // Ostrava, Czech Republic
N.E.R.D., Kygo, Jessie J, London Grammar, Joss Stone, Grace Jones, George Ezra, Kaleo, Future Islands, Ziggy Marley, more colours.cz

Electric Castle
7/18–22 // Bontida, Romania
Damian Marley, Jessie J, London Grammar, Mura Masa, Richie Hawtin, Excision, Groove Armada, more electriccastle.ro

Moondance Jam
7/19–21 // Walker, MN
Kid Rock, Tesla, Bret Michaels, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, Fuel, Kansas, Ace Frehley, more
moondancejam.com

Slottsfjell
7/19–21 // Tønsberg, Norway
Alan Walker, Arif, Cashmere Cat, Diplo, First Aid Kit, French Montana, Galantis, Two Door Cinema Club, more slottsfjell.no

Super Bock Super Rock
7/19–21 // Lisbon, Portugal
The xx, Justice, Travis Scott, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Julian Casablancas & The Voidz, more
superbocksuperrock.pt

Bluedot
7/19–22 // Cheshire, United Kingdom
The Chemical Brothers, The Flaming Lips, Future Islands, *The Blue Planet*

Sloss

Crystal Sujata

in concert with the Hallé Orchestra, Slowdive, more
discoverthebluedot.com

Country Thunder Wisconsin
7/19-22 // Twin Lakes, WI
Luke Bryan, Toby Keith, Dierks Bentley, Sam Hunt, Brothers Osborne, Brett Young, Tyler Farr, Midland, more
countrythunder.com/wi

Festival Internacional de Benicàssim
7/19-22 // Benicàssim, Spain
The Killers, Liam Gallagher, Travis Scott, Pet Shop Boys, Justice, Two Door Cinema Club, Belle and Sebastian, more
fiberfib.com/en

Grey Fox Bluegrass
7/19-22 // Oak Hill, NY
Dry Branch Fire Squad, The Del McCoury Band, Sam Bush Band, Billy Strings, Hot Rize, Jerry Douglas, The Wood Brothers, more
greyfoxbluegrass.com

Northwest String Summit
7/19-22 // North Plains, OR
Yonder Mountain String Band, Greensky Bluegrass, Railroad Earth, The Infamous Stringdusters, Leftover Salmon, Keller Williams, more
stringsummit.com
Festival Facts: Once again, Yonder Mountain String Band have brought together an all-star list of fellow bluegrass acts for their Northwest String Summit, which may represent the pinnacle of boutique bluegrass festivals across the country.

R Peach
7/19-22 // Scranton, PA
Phil Lesh & The Terrapin Family Band, Gov't Mule, Dickey Betts, Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Umphrey's McGee, moe., Oteil & Friends, more
thepeachmusicfestival.com

Vielles Charrues
7/19-22 // Carhaix, France
Gorillaz, Robert Plant & The Sensational Space Shifters, Kygo, Depeche Mode, Fatboy Slim, Portugal. The Man, more
vieillescharrues.asso.fr

Jerry Jam
7/20-22 // Bath, NH
Melvin Seals & JGB, Max Creek, Reid Genauer, The Samples, Kung Fu, Pink Talking Fish, RoC's Grateful Dub, more
jerryjam.com

Mares Vivas
7/20-22 // Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal
David Guetta, Jamiroquai, Rita Ora, Kodaline, Goo Goo Dolls, Richie Campbell, Joss Stone, LP, more
maresvivas.meo.pt

Pitchfork
7/20-22 // Chicago, IL
Tame Impala, Fleet Foxes, Ms. Lauryn Hill, The War On Drugs, Courtney Barnett, Chaka Khan, Blood Orange, more
pitchforkmusicfestival.com

Splendour in the Grass
7/20-22 // Yelgun, Australia
Kendrick Lamar, Lorde, Vampire Weekend, Khalid, The Wombats, more
splendourinthegrass.com

Tomorrowland
7/20-22 & 27-29 // Boom, Belgium
Alesso, David Guetta, Alison Wonderland, Tiësto, Dua Lipa, Alan Walker, Above & Beyond, Paul Oakenfold, more
tomorrowland.com/en

Float Fest
7/21-22 // San Marcos, TX
Tame Impala, Bassnectar, Snoop Dogg, Modest Mouse, Run the Jewels, Glass Animals, White Denim, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, more
floatfest.net

FYF Fest
7/21-22 // Los Angeles, CA
Janet Jackson, Florence + The Machine, Future, St. Vincent, The xx, My Bloody Valentine, Unknown Mortal Orchestra, more
fyffest.com

FloydFest
7/25-29 // Floyd, VA
Foster the People, Jason Isbell and The 400 Unit, Old Crow Medicine Show, Gov't Mule, The Infamous Stringdusters, ZZ Ward, more
floydfest.com

Camp Bestival
7/26-29 // East Lulworth, United Kingdom
Simple Minds, Rick Astley, Clean Bandit, Orbital, Basement Jaxx, Rae Morris, Sara Cox, Shed Seven, more
campbestival.net

Country Crossings
7/26-29 // Central Point, OR
Cole Swindell, Alan Jackson, Brad Paisley, Eric Church, Brett Young, Brothers Osborne, Chris Janson, more
cxfest.com

Kendal Calling
7/26-29 // Penrith, United Kingdom
The Libertines, Catfish & The Bottlemen, Run DMC, The Wailers, Hacienda Classical, Ocean Colour Scene, more
kendalcalling.co.uk

Red Ants Pants
7/26-29 // White Sulphur Springs, MT
Dwight Yoakam, Pam Tillis & Lorrie Morgan, Shovels & Rope, Steep Canyon Rangers, Jim Lauderdale, more
redantspantsmusicfestival.com

The Werk Out

Standon Calling
7/26-29 // Standon, United Kingdom
Paloma Faith, George Ezra, Bryan Ferry, Goldfrapp, Django Django, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, The Horrors, more
standon-calling.com

Y Not
7/26-29 // Pikehall, United Kingdom
The Libertines, Catfish & The Bottlemen, Jamiroquai, Manic Street Preachers, Kaiser Chiefs, The Wombats, more
ynotfestival.com

Tumble Down
7/27-28 // Burlington, VT
Twiddle, Matisyahu, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Ripe, Billy Strings, Broccoli Samurai, Brandon "Taz" Niederauer, more
twiddlemusic.com

Fuji Rock
7/27-29 // Yuzawa, Japan
Bob Dylan, Kendrick Lamar, N.E.R.D., Vampire Weekend, Post Malone, CHVRCHES, Dirty Projectors, MGMT, Greensky Bluegrass, more
fujirock-eng.com

Low
7/27-29 // Benidorm, Spain
The Chemical Brothers, Phoenix, Biffy Clyro, Los Planetas, Izal, Vitalic, Kakkmaddafadda, León Benavente, more
lowfestival.es

Mountain Home
7/27-29 // Elmore County, ID
Eric Church, Alan Jackson, Dierks Bentley, Chris Janson, Brothers Osborne, Dustin Lynch, Ashley McBryde, more
mountainhomefestival.com

R Newport Folk
7/27-29 // Newport, RI
Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, Courtney Barnett, Gary Clark Jr., Sturgill Simpson, The Wood Brothers, Brandi Carlile, Nicole Atkins, more
newportfolk.org

Panorama
7/27-29 // New York, NY
Janet Jackson, The Killers, The Weeknd, The xx, Migos, SZA, David Byrne, Father John Misty, Fleet Foxes, Cardi B, The War On Drugs, more
panorama.nyc

RockyGrass
7/27-29 // Lyons, CO
Sam Bush Bluegrass Band, David Grisman & Peter Rowan play Old & In The Way, Hot Rize, Steep Canyon Rangers, Jeff Austin Band, more
bluegrass.com/rockygrass

XPoNential
7/27-29 // Camden, NJ
The War On Drugs, David Byrne, Sturgill Simpson, Sylvan Esso, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Bermuda Triangle, more
xpnfest.org

Inclusion
7/28-29 // Jermyn, NJ
The Hoppin' Boxcars, The Merry Rockers, Reef The Lost Cauze, Brady Rymer, more
inclusionfestival.com

Arenal Sound
7/31-8/5 // Burriana, Spain
Bad Bunny, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Crystal Fighters, Steve Aoki, Lost Frequencies, Dorian, La Raíz, more
arenalsound.com/en

A Summer's Tale
8/1-4 // Luhmühlen, Germany
Belle and Sebastian, Mando Diao, Fury in the Slaughterhouse, Editors, Madness, Passenger, more
asummerstale.de/en

Belladrum Tartan Heart
8/2-4 // Beauly, United Kingdom
Paloma Faith, Primal Scream, Amy MacDonald, Frightened Rabbit, You Me At Six, The Charlatans, more
tartanheartfestival.co.uk

Wacken
8/2-4 // Wacken, Germany
Judas Priest, Danzig, Nightwish, In Flames, Ghost, Helloween Pumpkins United, Running Wild, more
wacken.com/en

WE Fest
8/2-4 // Detroit Lakes, MN
Jason Aldean, Carrie Underwood, Florida Georgia Line, Vince Gill,

Joshua Timmermans

Chris Young, Justin Moore, Dan + Shay, more wefest.com

The Werk Out
8/2-4 // Thornville, OH
The Werks, Umphrey's McGee, Lettuce, Papadosio, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Twiddle, Turkuaz, Knower, more
thewerkoutfestival.com

Big Valley Jamboree
8/2-5 // Camrose, Canada
Alabama, Florida Georgia Line, Thomas Rhett, Dallas Smith, Brett Eldredge, Paul Brandt, Billy Ray Cyrus, more
bigvalleyjamboree.com

Lollapalooza
8/2-5 // Chicago, IL
Jack White, The Weeknd, Bruno Mars, Arctic Monkeys, Vampire Weekend, The National, Travis Scott, Portugal. The Man, St. Vincent, more
lollapalooza.com

Untold
8/2-5 // Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Jason Derulo, The Chainsmokers, The Prodigy, Afrojack, Alesso, Armin van Buuren, Diplo, Kygo, Steve Aoki, more
untold.com/en

Wilderness
8/2-5 // Cornbury Park, United Kingdom
Nile Rodgers & Chic, Bastille, Jon Hopkins, Kamasi Washington, Baxter Dury, !!!, IAMDDB, Palace, more
wildernessfestival.com

LEAF Downtown
8/3-5 // Asheville, NC
Lineup TBA
theleaf.org/downtown

Hinterland
8/3-4 // Saint Charles, IA
Sturgill Simpson, Band of Horses, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, CHVRCHES, Blackberry Smoke, Margo Price, Tash Sultana, more
hinterlandiowa.com

ARISE
8/3-5 // Loveland, CO
Slightly Stoopid, Thievery Corporation, Trevor Hall, Pepper, Living Legends, OTT, Dumpstaphunk, Everyone Orchestra, more
arisefestival.com

Falcon Ridge Folk
8/3-5 // Hillsdale, NY
Dar Williams, The Slambovian Circus of Dreams, Tempest, Greg Greenway, Great Bear, The Clayfoot Strutters, more falconridgefolk.com

Newport Jazz
8/3-5 // Newport, RI
Charles Lloyd's 80th Birthday Celebration, George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, R+R=NOW, Pat Metheny, Jon Batiste, more
newportjazz.org
Festival Facts: Legendary jazz saxophonist and flautist Charles Lloyd will celebrate his 80th birthday with a trio of performances at Newport Jazz, starting with a Friday gig in the trio Sangam with Zakir Hussain and Eric Harland, continuing with the Charles Lloyd New Quartet on Saturday, and rounding out with a Lloyd-led supergroup featuring Lucinda Williams and others.

OFF
8/3-5 // Katowice, Poland
Grizzly Bear, Zola Jesus, The Brian Jonestown Massacre, Big Freedia, Turbonegro, Aurora, more
off-festival.pl/en

Osheaga
8/3-5 // Montreal, Canada
Arctic Monkeys, Florence + The Machine, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The National, St. Vincent, James Blake, Franz Ferdinand, more
osheaga.com/en

Pickathon
8/3-5 // Happy Valley, OR
Broken Social Scene, Shakey Graves, Phosphorescent, Built to Spill, Rising Appalachia, I'm With Her, Blind Boys of Alabama, more
pickathon.com

Salmonfest
8/3-5 // Ninilchik, AK
Brandi Carlile, Michael Franti & Spearhead, Fruition, Front Country, Great American Taxi, Gasoline Lollipops, Lowdown Brass Band, more salmonfestalaska.org

Telluride Jazz
8/3-5 // Telluride, CO
Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers, Irma Thomas, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, Jaimoe's Jasssz Band, Turkuaz, more telluridejazz.org

Watershed
8/3-5 // George, WA
Big & Rich, Blake Shelton, Brad Paisley, Brantley Gilbert, Brett Young, Cassadee Pope, Clint Black, more watershedfest.com

Musikfest
8/3-13 // Bethlehem, PA
Trombone Shorty's Voodoo Threauxdown, Styx, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, Jason Mraz, Brantley Gilbert, more
musikfest.org

Eastern Electrics
8/4-5 // London, United Kingdom
Jamie Jones, Alan Fitzpatrick, Claude Vonstroke, David Rodigan, Ghetts CASisDEAD, 67, Matador, Skream, Josh Butler, Riva Starr, more
easternelectrics.com

20 Years Later

Clean Vibes enters its next decade still committed to creating a better scene By Gabby Strang

Anna Borofsky's decision to launch Clean Vibes may have started with a rejected college thesis on the impacts of festival garbage, but 20 years after her company hit the ground running, it's hard to imagine the live-music scene without her services. After working clean-up at Phish's Lemonwheel festival in 1998, Borofsky saw that the festival grounds at Loring Air Force Base were left not-so evergreen, and she wanted to make a change.

"[It] took us about two-and-a-half weeks to clean up the campgrounds in mostly pouring rain," she says. "And as a Phish fan, at the time, I was left thinking, 'I don't know if this is really a scene I wanna be a part of. I need to either walk away from this or try to do something about it.' Luckily, I chose the latter."

As the organization's creator and coordinator, Borofsky's take-charge attitude has nurtured a small army of volunteers who make Clean Vibes successful. The North Carolina and Bay Area-based organization, which started as just few hands-on members, challenges attendees to recycle at festivals like DelFest, Bonnaroo, Governors Ball, High Sierra, Forecastle, Outside Lands and Curveball. (They also lead the events' composting efferts.) Clean Vibes' goal is to raise awareness while enjoying the musical landscape, creating an environmental incentive for festivalgoers with the Clean Vibes Trading Post—a raffle contest where exchanging in trash can result in receiving items such as artist and festival merchandise.

"The great thing is we see a couple of hundred people who will spend 15-20 minutes at the Trading Posts, pick up a bag and get engaged. And then you have a couple dozen people where it really dominates their weekend and they get so into it and so passionate that they're out there picking out 50-60 bags of recycling," Borofsky says of the Trading Post system. "They just get totally pumped and it obviously catches on—it's contagious—and people see them doing it and they participate. We like to say that it's our way of incentivizing folks to be doing what they should be doing anyway because, in an ideal world, everyone is cleaning up after themselves."

That ideal world turns into a reality each festival season. The company's volunteer-based system has diverted almost 16 million pounds of trash and has branched out toward working non-festival events in an effort to expand their environmental enlightenment in a new-age world of entertainment culture where Coachella is a household name. "We're creating a city in a field," she says. "And we're showing people that within that city, we can still divert a huge amount of waste and that it is a simple, manageable thing to achieve."

For more information about how to work with Clean Vibes, visit cleanvibes.com.

DRAKE
motel
STAY WHERE
THE
STARS STAY

Jack White has explored countless sounds and styles throughout his surprising and inspiring career. That journey continues with his first solo album in four years, which once again manifests the creative explorations of a true idea man.

By **DEAN BUDNICK**

All Within REACH

Theon Delgado

ALTHOUGH JACK WHITE IS brimming with opinions, there is one subject that renders the otherwise garrulous musician altogether tongue-tied.

When it comes to the topic of recording his vast and varied new album, *Boarding House Reach*, he balks at inquiries regarding any mirth or merriment he may have experienced during the process.

"A lot of people tell me: 'Wow, it sure sounds like you had a lot of fun making this record,' and I just don't know how to answer that. That's a word that I've really struggled with my whole adult life. I want to say the right thing—'Yeah, it was a lot of fun.' But, that really diminishes all that went into it. There are a lot of musicians who worked really hard, a lot of engineers who worked really hard. 'Fun' makes it seem like we went to the amusement park."

"I think 'fun' is what Weird Al Yankovic does," he continues. "That's not an insult; I like him a lot. What he does is really fun. And I can't imagine them not laughing when they're recording. And then on the other side, I'll see how Captain Beefheart, Frank Zappa and Beck are able to figure out a way to combine humor and music in a way that makes sense. You can hear Captain Beefheart laughing on *Trout Mask Replica* because he loves the words so much. I laugh at metaphors that mean three different things at once. A while ago, in an interview, I said how, in The White Stripes, Meg and I didn't high-five each other at the end of a song after we mixed it. It wasn't like, 'Wow! We got somewhere; what a blast!' It was me in a room, with an engineer who wasn't saying anything and Meg who wasn't saying anything. I had to think, 'Where are we going with this and why are we doing it?' That's different than a group of four or five guys all kind of getting high and making each other laugh, cracking up and trying to have a blast. I don't really know if I've ever experienced that. Maybe I shouldn't."

Indeed, although White grew up Catholic in Detroit, he has plenty of New England Puritan work ethic in him, and that drive proved indispensable during the process of honing the material that became *Boarding House Reach*. He recorded the album on two coasts using separate teams of adroit, artful players who pushed the music well beyond the two to five minutes that White intended for the final tracks. And, by dint of necessity, he employed Pro Tools for the first time in his recording life in order to shape the results.

White's protracted digital editing sessions were prompted by the creative freedom he granted to his studio collaborators, most of whom were new to him and originated in the hip-hop and funk worlds, including drummer Louis Cato (Beyoncé, Q-Tip, John Legend), bassists Charlotte Kemp Muhl (The Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger) and Neon Phoenix (Kanye West, Herbie Hancock), synthesizer players DJ Harrison and Anthony "Brew" Brewster (Fishbone, The Untouchables), percussionists Bobby Allende (David Byrne, Marc Anthony) and Justin Porée (Ozomatli), and keyboardists Quincy McCrary (Unknown Mortal Orchestra, Pitbull) and Neal Evans (Soulive, Lettuce).

Evans is the member of this estimable roster who is likely most familiar to *Relix* readers and, as White explains, "Neal brought a great feel to the recordings we did in New York—lots of energy and funk in his playing. I wish I could take everyone who recorded the songs on tour, but I figured it might be interesting to see what Neal could come up with onstage along with Quincy McCrary. They have different styles, but both are so soulful."

His touring band, which also includes bassist Dominic Davis and drummer Carla Azar, will be able to experience those halcyon days before cell phones began to vie for the audience's attention. White has requested that concertgoers place their phones in Yondr pouches during the performances to enable him to better read the crowd while delivering his fully improvised setlists. "Maybe this will catch on," he suggests. "So far, it seems like it's really working for the best. I just played in Brooklyn and I haven't seen a louder, more engaged New York crowd in 12 years. So that's pretty cool."

So much of what you do is purposeful, yet we live in an age in which precision is in short order. People will make a statement, irrespective of the facts, and then modify that later with a tweet, sometimes contradicting their initial thought altogether. Do you find this baffling or disheartening?

One thing that I'm always looking for when I read about other artists is some kind of methodology about how they're doing what they're doing. I would say 95 percent of the music that's made out there—popular music and music with a big label behind it—has the same story. An artist goes into an expensive studio, records on a computer, and involves the best writers and producers in order to try to make a hit record. There's nothing that interesting about that.

It's not like going after a certain sound with a certain type of mechanical instrumentation, recording devices, microphones, environment, economic constraints or *anything* like that. I almost never hear stories about the methodology. It's probably because people are afraid to be pretentious on one side and, on the other side, it just doesn't matter to them. They don't care how it's done; they just want it to sound good. They're putting themselves in the hands of people who care about how to record and how to set up a microphone, and a lot of those people want to play with whatever the brand-new toy is. If it was 1983, then they'd be playing with gated reverbs, Eventide harmonizers and things that were the hot, new toys at that time. Now, it's whatever the latest plug-in is for Pro Tools, which is usually an emulation of something that really exists—like a fake reverb emulator to imitate actual reverb in real life.

I wish there were more people who had some sort of methodology, at least for my sake. I just want to care about how it's happening. Bob Dylan is one of the few who uses methodology whenever he works on something. The thing people misinterpret about what I'm trying to do is that I never put any thought into what kind of music I'm going to write or record. I focus on the methodology, which is the environment and the means to get there—the equipment and the people and the room.

For myself, it would be a mistake to say, "We're going to record a country song today." That's not my goal. A pop singer will go in and say, "We need to write a hit song because I'm a pop singer and people wanna hear hit songs, so we've got to figure out how to get there." They'll hire a team of songwriters, hire the hottest producer, spend the right amount of money and go into the best studio. For me, the sound of the song and the type of song it's gonna be are not my goals, which is probably why, on my albums, every song takes on a completely different character than the last song. I don't begin by saying, "I'm going to make a punk-rock record" or "I'm gonna make a soul, R&B record." I just set up the scenario like, "This is how many days we're doing it, this is who's gonna be here, this is the environment, this is how much money we're gonna spend,

Jack White in his early blue period at Bonnaroo 2014.

Dean Budnick

these are the microphones we're gonna use and then whatever happens, happens. The music becomes real for me under those circumstances.

How important do you think it is for the listener to comprehend the context in which you are creating your music?
That's been an interesting dilemma for me over the years. It's also a modern scenario. If you loved a movie in the '70s that had an amazing train wreck in it, you would talk with other film lovers about how they did that train wreck, how they positioned the cameras, how they made it look realistic, how they made this horse or man fall off a cliff, and what they did to make something happen. Now, if you see something amazing on screen, the answer is simple: It was done on a computer, end of conversation.

I used to think that if I'm doing something, at least I want to be able to say, "Here's how it was done and here's how we got there." Then, I'd be able to defend it by saying, "We used a ribbon microphone and we used this kind of compressor into a tape machine onto analog tape, and we edited it with an actual razor blade. We didn't use any computers or any Photoshop or CGI." I used to think that people thought that was very important. Over the years, I've learned that it's mostly the people in my environment who think that stuff is interesting: engineers, at times other musicians and people like you who care about music.

While a lot of the fans going back to the '60s-'70s and even all the way through '90s would care how something was done, the modern teenager doesn't care what is making any of those sounds on the new Cardi B song. I don't blame them for that—why should they care? If they like the song, they like the song. If they're watching some superhero movie the night before, then why should they care what program went into making that spaceship explode? When I was a teenager, I definitely cared where things were coming from because I liked so much about music and, also, because I was learning how to record.

Although, to present the perspective you would normally offer, doesn't that add richness and nuance, allowing someone to connect on another level?
Oh, of course. If it's my teenage son, I want to explain all that to him—"Here's how The Beatles got that drum sound. They used this Fairchild compressor, they put damping on the cymbals to get that tone." But, if I didn't say that to my son, who would? If he doesn't really love music in an in-depth way, will he seek it out? I don't know. It's hard to say.

When I say these things, I sometimes think people believe I'm preaching to them about the way *they* should enjoy music. People should enjoy music however they want to enjoy it.

Another thing happens when I start talking about the historical side of music too much, like I have many times: It makes people think that you're trying to emulate a Charlie Patton or Robert Johnson or Howlin' Wolf recording that you heard once. I remember when The Raconteurs played in Detroit, my hometown, someone told me that a friend in the crowd had said, "For a guy who loves The Stooges so much, I don't understand why this band sounds nothing like them." And it was like, "OK, so if I say in interviews that I love The Stooges, then somehow that means everything I'm writing is supposed to sound like The Stooges?" Sometimes I think that maybe I shouldn't say stuff like that because then I'll have to answer for it and people will think I'm failing at what I'm trying to accomplish. [*Laughs.*]

But I definitely agree that the nuances, and the how and where are interesting. If a song is beautiful, I want to know, "Well, who wrote it? How did they record it? Where did they record it?" Whenever you go into a studio, they'll say, "This was the board they used on *Pet Sounds*" or "I bought this compressor from Olympic Studios and all the early Yardbirds stuff was done on this. You'll hear stories like that from every engineer in every studio—almost proof that this is a good piece of equipment.

I always think it's a mitzvah to at least give people the opportunity to absorb these details.
Oh, man! Are you kidding me? I've been spending my whole adult life doing that. At Third Man Records [White's record store/label], basically everything we do is to try and expose people to the beauty of this side of things. I'm trying to sound realistic, not negative. If a teenager comes into Third Man and buys a blues record and asks, "What was Paramount Records?" or "Who is Blind Willie McTell?" any one of us who works there will sit down for an hour to discuss that. But if you're asking why they should care, that's a whole other dark, depressing thought. [*Laughs.*]

All of this is related to something that I think about all the time, which is whether it's worth putting out records for the public. Is it worth the energy? Is it worth the long hours and maybe even the negativity that comes along with every aspect of all that work? It also means sitting in

mud-covered festivals in the Netherlands, or on long plane rides away from your children. And the idea of who people think you are and what you're allowed to do musically and artistically—all the baggage that comes along with all that.

What do people expect from you and what will they allow you to get away with? You have to be sneaky at times if you want to get past everybody else's sensors. But this time, I was pretty blatant: Here is how this song sounds, and this is how my voice sounds and this is all it's gonna be. That's it. You either love it or hate it. This album is much more divisive than I thought it was going to be. That, to me, is really pleasing because it reminds me of all these conversations I had throughout the years with other people who love music and who are musicians and writers—talking about the merits of a certain album in coffeehouses or bars, and talking about certain songs, albums or bands. It's great to hear people discussing a record like what I've just put out and discussing the pros and cons of it. I'm really glad about that.

I haven't really read about a divisive record in a while, so I'm glad that those conversations are happening. That's why I'm a huge supporter of those brick-and-mortar record stores and vinyl records. The vinyl is really the MacGuffin; it's the format that makes more sense for us all to circle around. But the real point is for the appreciation of art and music, and for the conversations that come out of it. Those record stores were the meccas for those conversations to occur. You walk in and say, "I wanna buy a Led Zeppelin record," and then maybe someone behind the counter would say, "If you like that, you need to check out this Sonny Boy Williamson song, and you need to check out this Willie Dixon record." And if you're smart enough to do that, then you're on your way to a lifetime of fulfillment.

Jumping back to Pro Tools, did you agonize over the decision to utilize that on this record?

I had recorded in New York with a group of musicians and then in LA with another group of musicians. So when I got back to Nashville, a lot of these songs were 20-30 minutes long and they had 16-18 tracks of music. Now, for most modern recordings, that's absolutely nothing but, for me, it's a lot. I usually record on 8-track. For example, *Revolver* was recorded on a four track–16 tracks involves way too many opportunities and choices that I don't even want to be involved in.

So I was in a conundrum of how to edit this stuff down and the only way to really do it was on Pro Tools. Now, in Pro Tools' defense, I think it's brilliant as an editing tool. I've never liked the sound of digital recording—the tone of it, the plug-ins, the emulations, the fake reverbs, and the fake compressors and stuff. That's not to say that anyone can't use it and make something good-sounding out of it, but I've just never been able to.

I've directed videos and short pieces that I've edited on Final Cut Pro and said, "Hey, let's cut the frame right there and then let's change this to infrared-looking black and white." Or, I'll think, "What does it look like if you do this, if you add this solarization?" You can look at it for one second and see if you like it. Back in the days of film, it would've taken days to have someone process the film and edit it with scissors and tape, and then you might see it and say, "Nah, I don't like it. It doesn't look right." Now, you can look at it in two seconds and see if you even like that idea. That's really nice. I think for editing, computers are incredible.

> "You have to be sneaky at times if you want to get past everybody else's sensors. But this time, I was pretty blatant."
> JACK WHITE

This is your first album since 2014's *Lazaretto*. Was there a specific moment you decided to go back in the studio?

I had been thinking that, for a couple years, I'd just spend time with my kids. The only thing I had done was rent an apartment and set up some equipment so, whenever I wanted, I could just go there and be by myself with no distractions and write. But I didn't have a time frame in mind for that. I just thought, "Well, that's a scenario. I'll go there once in a while and work on music by myself and use a couple of different methods, then we'll see what happens. Maybe it'll be something interesting."

I had no time frame where I had an album set to come out, and I wasn't booking shows. I turned down festivals and all kinds of offers for two or three years because I didn't really have it in mind. But as 12-13 songs started to pile up, I thought, "I think it might be time for me to go into my studio in Nashville and see if it makes sense to make larger versions of these songs."

When you brought those songs to New York, were they relatively spare when you presented them to the players?

Most of them were really light—just a couple of notes or a drumbeat or a drum loop I'd have them play along with. I would record a drum loop in Nashville, play it for them and say, "Here's the melody," or the riff, and I'd see what happens. Then, I would take that same recording to LA and have a whole new group of musicians play on top of what we just did and add even more to it. So some of these songs have three or four drummers on them, or three or four pianos or keys, and just a lot of choices. I would say this album was mostly an editing scenario. The writing was very fast, in a lot of cases.

The musicianship was outstanding—all these musicians' energy was incredible because nobody knew each other. We were all strangers so everyone's got this great energy in the room—electricity—trying to impress one another, trying to add something cool. They know that we're not there for long, so we better hurry up and figure something out quickly. So we got that great energy on tape and then I spent months editing it, almost like someone editing a film.

Not every method always works for me. You try different things out—"Over and Over and Over" had a complete structure to it because the song was so old. I had recorded it so many times and it never worked out. I had that song mapped out already—this verse, this chorus, this change, these notes. It was just a matter of: "Can we capture the right energy and sound and tones on tape that really bring it to life?" I'd failed at that many times but we finally got it.

Then, with "Corporation," I had a drum loop and I gave them the riff, they played along with it and I didn't tell them to do anything. They just did whatever they wanted to do and we jammed for 20-30 minutes. Then, it becomes a question of: "Man, there's so many good sections where somebody would play some amazing clavinet solo or some really cool bassline." And you have to figure out how to edit them all down and make them work together.

I would love to release the 20-minute versions of these songs one day because they're so cool. But it was a matter of trying to get it down to a palatable time frame. One thing I knew was I didn't want to make a double album. I wanted to make a single album, so a lot of these songs had to be cut way down to three or four minutes—something that made sense for a single album.

Your work is often aggressively dissected by fans and music critics alike. Do you ever find that you give away too much of yourself in a song?

I honestly don't. There are definitely times when, if you are a certain person in my life, you would probably

Continued on page 86

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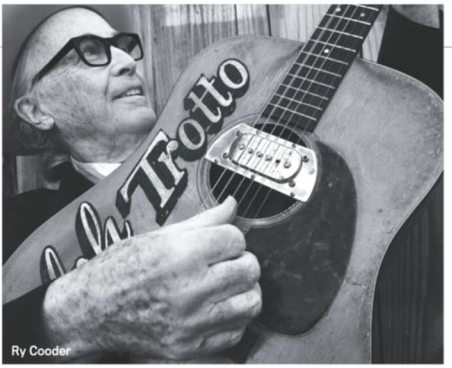
JIM JAMES

Uniform Distortion ATO

"I'm motherfucking out of my mind," **Jim James** barks on "Yes to Everything," a ragged classic-rock anthem from his third solo LP. The dude ain't kidding. *Uniform Distortion*, like much of the singer-songwriter's work, is fueled by the thirst for cosmic spiritual truths. But unlike anything else in his catalog, this one's unsettlingly unhinged: filled with demo-worthy fidelity and disarmingly sparse arrangements, undercut with an inescapable feeling of madness. On first listen, many of the songs feel half-baked, undercooked—the product of a spontaneous four-track freak-out session. But the emotions lurking underneath have been brewing for decades. The album originated from a deep modern anxiety, one that James illuminated in his letter to photographer Duane Michals, whose literally mind-blowing 1971 image graces the jacket cover. "I have been feeling increasingly overwhelmed by the speed of technology and its place in our lives," James wrote. And *Uniform Distortion* is the raw-nerve result of that dread. The grimy, guitar-centric sound is a complete 180 from the lush, electro-tinged R&B sprawl of 2016's *Eternally Even* and the lonesome, reverby folk of 2017 covers LP *Tribute to 2*. James fills these 11 compact tracks with squalls of feedback, primal power chords, and madcap, edge-of-delirium laughter. It's a strange combination: His simplest songs, constantly on the verge of collapse. But if given a wide enough digestion period, the unruly approach takes on an appealing symmetry. This is James letting his hair all the way down, without the ornate psych-rock trappings of modern My Morning Jacket. Fans of the band's *It Still Moves* era will find a touch of their patented yearning, out-in-the-barn glow in the soulful, Southern, Fleetwood Mac ambiance of "No Secrets," the daydreamy harmonies of "Throwback" and the metallic stoner twang of "No Use Waiting." The album may have arisen from a dark sense of isolation, but James remains an eternal optimist in the face of anguish. "When we were young, all the potential in the world," he belts on "Throwback." In an era of perpetual division, of "uniform distortion," he's still chasing the narcotic thrill of human intimacy. Sometimes you have to go a little crazy to get a little sane. ***Ryan Reed***



Ry Cooder

Ry Cooder

The Prodigal Son FANTASY

In the Bible, the tale of the prodigal son describes the journey a soul takes to the edge of destruction, before heading home to family and redemption. **Ry Cooder** mirrors that passage through damnation and salvation on his 11-track gospel-flavored latest LP. The results boast the darkest, most subtle instrumental work of his career. His son **Joachim** served as his co-producer, adding touches of color that elevate the scenarios Cooder paints with his rich baritone; throughout, his voice veers from righteous indignation to arch humor. Cooder's distorted slide guitar gives standards like "Everybody Ought to Treat a Stranger Right" and "The Prodigal Son"—with its nod to slide-guitar legend Ralph Mooney—a jubilant aura that's augmented by the backing vocals of gospel vets **Terry Evans**, **Arnold McCuller** and **Bobby King**. Blind Alfred Reed's "You Must Unload" is twisted into a second-line strut, with Cooder on banjo and a hint of doo-wop in the backing vocals, while The Stanley Brothers' "Harbor of Love" benefits from Cooder's reverent singing and a guitar chiming like church bells ringing in the distance. The album highlight, however, is an original, "Jesus and Woody." Cooder takes the part of the weary savior, bemoaning the "engines of hate" being revved up by the current administration. He clearly views salvation with an agnostic heart, hoping for something better, even as he acknowledges the swirling chaos—political and personal—that currently surrounds us. It's a delicate balancing act, and one that he neatly pulls off with his subtle vocals and low-key instrumental virtuosity. *J. Poet*

Willie Nelson

Last Man Standing LEGACY

On *Last Man Standing*, **Willie Nelson** turns in another collection of original tunes in the mode of his 2017 release *God's Problem Child*, which movingly explored mortality and loss. "Heaven Is Closed" rides a quiet Waylon Jennings backbeat and equates the end of a relationship with the ending of life, although Nelson's singing implies that he's coping fine with the help of an herbal friend.

Buddy Cannon—who worked on a set of arrangements that combine the best elements of swing, country and jazz, the building blocks of Nelson's inimitable style—served as a co-writer. There's a hint of R&B in "Something You Get Through," a ballad of graceful resignation delivered with a quiet, grieving vocal supported by **Mike Johnson**'s moaning pedal steel. Nelson sings "I'll Try To Do Better Next Time," a gospel tinged waltz, with an uplifting combination of humor and sadness. That darkness is balanced by flashes of arch humor on up tempo tunes like "Ready to Roar," a jaunty Bob Wills-flavored piece of Texas swing that allows the backing band to stretch out a bit, "Don't Tell Noah," an irreverent rocker that salutes the positive power of acting out and going crazy and "I Ain't Got Nothin'," a country blues nugget driven by **Jim "Moose" Brown**'s honky-tonk piano, Johnson's playful steel solo and an arch tag line: "I gave you a ring, you gave me the finger." *J. Poet*

Neko Case

Hell-On ANTI-

What to say about a singer who, in a press release for her own new album, remarks, "My style is odd, I don't know what genre this is," then compares herself to Bulgarian folk singers and suggests she might have been, in another time, "a caller of wasps?" On her album cover, she's depicted wearing a headdress of cigarettes and ignoring a shoulder shooting flames. Whether that all raises or diminishes expectations, the largely self-produced *Hell-On* isn't impenetrable in the slightest. "Bad Luck" might find **Neko Case** ruminating on various misfortunes, but they're harmless ones ("I chipped my tooth on an engagement ring," "ate a black fly in the cream"), and it's set to a frisky melody accessible enough to have graced the Top 40 in a more innocent decade. The title track, with Case pondering the mysteries of both God and herself ("I am not a mess, I'm a wilderness, yes"), makes use of kalimba, autoharp and guitar to set its exotic temperament but, by the time she reaches her chorus ("Nothing quite so poison as a promise"), harmonizing sweetly with **Rachel Flotard**, it's settled into something approaching the accessible. "I write songs from a feeling of solidarity with folks who feel alone or isolated. I think I'm trying to comfort people in this way," says Case in that same press release. That works too. Neko Case has never been an easy one to pin down. That's precisely why she's so worthwhile. *Jeff Tamarkin*

CHVRCHES

Love Is Dead GLASSNOTE

There's a sense of ache that lies within the buoyant pop melodies on *Love Is Dead*, the third LP from **CHVRCHES**. The album, which follows 2015's beloved release *Every Open Eye*, is interested in that balance between soaring optimism and unavoidable sadness. From the boisterous anthem of "Get Out," the flagship single off the record, to the glittering synth of "Heaven/Hell," it's clear that the musicians are grappling with some big questions that require even bigger answers. On the latter, singer **Lauren Mayberry** questions, "Is this heaven? Or is this hell?" Later, on "Really Gone," the band strips away the layers of synth beats and leaves Mayberry's voice to carry the heartbroken message as she wails, "I'm doing my best to toughen up for these days." Hit-maker **Greg Kurstin** sat at the helm for much of the production, which shows during these moments that pair pop hooks with deeply thought moments of bittersweet emotion. The National's **Matt Berninger** appears on "My Enemy," a hauntingly dark duet that matches Mayberry's sweet croon with Berninger's gravely moan. It's a revelation for CHVRCHES, who mostly rely on Mayberry's voice to carry their tracks (although there have been a few past exceptions when one of her bandmates has stepped in). Berninger's presence augments an already mournful song, adding a welcome juxtaposition to the band's glimmering melody. This album, as a whole, isn't a vast departure for CHVRCHES, but it's certainly a great evolution—one that suggests they have the ability to hang on to the best parts of their sound while continuing to adapt to the world around them. *Emily Zemler*

Brazilian Girls

Let's Make Love SIX DEGREES

It's been a full decade since **Brazilian Girls** issued their third LP, the Grammy-nominated *New York City*, and they've barely maintained a pulse in the interim. Though the alt-dance quartet contributed a track to a Red Hot charitable compilation in 2011 and have played a few sporadic reunion shows, their prognosis did not seem good. Singer **Sabina Sciubba** sought out her own career opportunities, releasing a solo album and co-starring in the Zach Galifianakis TV comedy *Baskets*. In this context, their comeback record *Let's Make Love* could wind up with two polar opposite outcomes: a rusty, regrettable retread or a rejuvenated rebirth. Luckily, it's the latter, as the band giddily runs the gamut from loungey retro synth-pop (the vocoder-laced "Wild Wild Web") to sample-driven electro-funk ("Looking for Love") to the art-punk thrust of the title track. As usual, so much of the impact rests on Sciubba's shoulders, as her sultry French delivery makes every random line feel profound. ("Listen to the music, don't play the critic," she pleads over the Deerhoof-ish art-jazz strut of "The Critic." By the track's end, she'd almost convinced me.) It's a rarity in modern alternative music, but Brazilian Girls always radiated a sense of fun—and despite the long delay, that message hasn't dimmed one bit. "Let's make love and forget about the money/ Let's make love and forget about the rest," Sciubba sings. In an era of increasingly fucked-up headlines, her escapist message has never felt more crucial. *Ryan Reed*

Tony Banks

Five BMG

It's easy to roll your eyes when a rock star detours into the classical realm. But for **Tony Banks**, former keyboardist-composer of Genesis, the transition is perfectly logical: Most of the band's classic prog period soars on his elegant themes on organ, piano, and synth. Where ELP keyboardist Keith Emerson often transformed orchestral material into electric noise, Banks took the opposite approach: At his core, he was a classical-level composer operating in a rock context. *Five*, his third symphonic project, underscores that point: These sweeping themes could have easily fueled a Genesis reunion album. Transpose the brass and strings over to keyboards and guitars, and these pieces would feel at home on 1976's *Wind & Wuthering* or 1980's *Duke*. *Five* began with a scaled-back version of centerpiece "Prelude to a Million Years," which Banks composed for a performance

at the 2014 Cheltenham Music Festival. Here, aided by the **Czech National Symphony Orchestra and Choir**, the 15-minute epic showcases the full spectrum of Banks' melodic gifts and **Nick Ingman**'s knack for arranging those ideas into an orchestral setting (highlighted by pizzicato strings, timpani crashes, and moaning horns). The solo performers offer unique tonal colors to each piece, from **Martin Robertson**'s haunting duduk (an Armenian woodwind instrument) on "Renaissance" to **John Barclay**'s piercing cornet on "Reveille." Both classical snobs and prog purists may still be skeptical of Banks' musical evolution, but *Five* proves the two camps aren't as far apart as they may think. *Ryan Reed*

Ryley Walker

Deafman Glance DEAD OCEANS

Ryley Walker emerged in the early 2010s as one of indie-rock's most exciting guitarists–a malleable player capable of intricate baroque-folk fingerpicking and jazzy solos. But in recent years, he's grown frustrated with his image as an acoustic jammer, and he's aiming to redefine himself on his fifth LP, *Deafman Glance*–emphasizing tightly knit song structures over improvisation. It would be unwise to expect a traditional singer-songwriter album; that description hardly reflects the album's dazzling stylistic breadth. Enlisting former Wilco multi-instrumentalist **Leroy Bach** (who also helmed 2016's *Golden Sings That Have Been Sung*) as his co-producer, Walker seamlessly flows from lightly psychedelic indie-rock ("Telluride Speed") to bewitching ambient folk ("Can't Ask Why") to an eyebrow-raising concoction of jazz-pop groove and dissonant noise ("22 Days"). And his arrangements are more vivid than ever. Just take opener "In Castle Dome," a breezy electric-guitar daydream that blooms with vintage synths, "Strawberry Fields Forever" mellotron and woody double-bass. The reference points are so scattered, it's hard to keep track of them all: His guitar work can morph from Pentagle to Steely Dan to White Denim at the drop of a chord, and his half-sighed vocal style still recalls Beck in *Sea Change* balladeer mode. It's ironic that Walker wanted to tame himself on *Deafman Glance*–in reality, he's expanded his range. *Ryan Reed*

John Mayall

Three for the Road FORTY BELOW

Following the release of his last album, 2017's *Talk About That*, **John Mayall** discovered that he didn't really need a lead guitarist in his band anymore. So the man who nurtured the careers of Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Mick Taylor and several other blues-rock titans dismissed longtime guitarist Rocky Athas and stripped down to a trio. *Three for the Road* features only Mayall on vocals, keyboards and harmonica, with his regular rhythm section of **Greg Rzab** (bass) and **Jay Davenport** (drums) hanging around. The album was recorded live in Germany, and considering that it's the first time Mayall has toured with the guitarless trio format, it's a testament to him and the others that the music sounds as full as it does. They open with "Big Town Playboy," a stomper penned by Eddie Taylor that immediately casts any skepticism to the trash heap. Mayall's singing voice is a bit scratchier these days–he is, after all, 84–but he wears it well and has grown into one of those elder statesman of the blues he's always idolized. Those heroes still provide some of his best material too: Lightnin' Hopkins' "I Feel So Bad" is given a punchier reading than the author would've tried, and "Tears Came Rollin' Down," written by Henry Townsend and recorded previously by Mayall on his *Chicago Line* album, goes deep as it plays out casually. Mayall has always been a fine pianist and it's a treat to hear him placing the instrument up front, on songs from his own pen or sources as diverse as Lionel Hampton and Sonny Landreth. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Old Crow Medicine Show

Volunteer COLUMBIA NASHVILLE

"I made a deal with the devil, so I/ Get to live on the highway until I die," **Old Crow Medicine Show** proclaim on their sixth studio album. Indeed, *Volunteer*, like the rest of the wild string band's discography, sounds like the work a band possessed: full of punk energy and boot-stomping bluegrass passion. Working with producer **Dave Cobb** (Sturgill Simpson, Jason Isbell), the sextet aimed to inject a little rock edge into their latest LP. They tapped into the back-porch Southern rocker wisdom of Lynyrd Skynyrd on several cuts–from the slide-laced "Child of the Mississippi" to the fiddle-led "Old Hickory" (a sort of modern update on "The Ballad of Curtis Loew") to the somberly strummed "Look Away" (which also recalls the dreamy "two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl" cadence of Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here"). Fittingly, the band also utilized electric guitars for the first time 2004, offering a Telecaster twang to country-folk tunes like "Dixie Avenue," which hilariously manages to recall both The Osborne Brothers' Tennessee anthem "Rocky Top" and Eddy Grant's "Electric Avenue" with its yelped vocal melody. It's not a typical Americana move–but then again, Old Crow has never been a typical Americana band. Sure, certain cuts adhere closely to bluegrass/country tradition, from the generic rave-ups of "Shout Mountain Music" and "Elzick's Farewell." But even with these lesser moments, you emerge with a goofy smile plastered to your mug. *Ryan Reed*

DJ Williams' Shots Fired

Live From Over Where PROJEKT

If you ever drop by one of **DJ Williams**' eclectic performances, then you'll be pleased to hear his electric guitar cut deep grooves between horns and basslines galore. With *Live From Over Where*, Williams brings his **Shots Fired** band from the stage into your headphones, collecting live cuts from shows in Los Angeles, San Diego and Richmond, Va. (as well as a couple of studio cuts). The guitarist started Shots Fired in 2016, and when he's not playing with Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, he invites a rotating lineup of skilled players to surround him as a kind of musical nucleus. *Live From Over Where* includes contributions by **Karl Denson**, Soulive drummer **Alan Evans** and trumpeter **Rashawn Ross** of Dave Matthews Band, just to name a few. And while these special guests certainly bolster Williams' work, he shines as the project's lead architect. "That's funky as shit right there," he declares on his own "Monk Strap." And he's not wrong. The track is entrenched in a '70s-style boogie that would make any funk aficionado kick up their platform shoes. In fact, with the exception a few choice covers–like a vocoder-laced version of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit"–Williams' original compositions stand out on this release. They're impressive because of their technicality, sure, but they also radiate Williams' own sense of strength. Considering the guitarist's harrowing and unnecessarily inhumane experience as a prisoner of the United Arab Emirates in 2017, his self-assuredness on this album is both relieving and empowering. "This record is truly the voice of my artistic vision on stages of places I call home around people I truly love," Williams writes in the album's liner notes. As a debut release from a talented and ambitious young guitarist, *Live From Over Where* is not only an exciting contribution to the funk canon, but also a worthy chapter in Williams' story. *Raffaela Kenny-Cincotta*

Beach House

7 SUB POP

Across their first six LPs, **Beach House** sculpted their own sonic universe from distinct, granular details. The instrumentation (the sparse drum machines, the airy organs, the smoldering tone of vocalist **Victoria Legrand**) and the production (reverb, more reverb) are arguably more crucial than the songwriting. And as musicians, that's a tricky place to be. If you fail to evolve, then you'll lose people's interest, and if you evolve too much, then you'll lose the qualities that made you *you*. So with *7*, as usual, we comb through the dream-pop haze in search of new tics and new tonal colors, and evaluate the painting based on the small brush strokes. (Is the hi-hat pattern on "x" the exact same as "y"? What kind of effects pedal is **Alex Scally** using on that slide-guitar riff? Wait, is that a bass guitar?) The duo's latest strikes an always-comforting balance of old and new. In the former camp, you have "Lemon Glow," with Legrand's voice billowing through an alluring cloud of decayed guitar notes and synth pulses. In the latter, there's "L'Inconnue," an atmospheric swell of French choral voices, churning orchestral keys and harmonized electric guitars à la Ratatat (via Queen's Brian May). No, there isn't a single classic Beach House song here–a single melody that floods the imagination the way "Norway," "Zebra" or "Wild" did in the band's breakthrough era. But *7* is a grower, and we owe Beach House enough of our patience to flesh out these miniature moments of wonder. *Ryan Reed*

Spafford

The Manhattan Transfer

The Junction BMG

The 2014 passing of Tim Hauser, one of the co-founders of the vocal quartet **The Manhattan Transfer**, not only robbed the group of one of its essential voices but also, in many ways, of its spiritual center. Hauser was the only member to remain since the outfit's inception in 1969 and, as something of a walking encyclopedia of vocal-group music, it was mainly he who gave MT its direction, a classy mélange of doo-wop, jazz vocalese and swing, pop and R&B stylings, and more. With a slew of Grammys and millions of records sold, the surviving singers **Cheryl Bentyne**, **Janis Siegel** and **Alan Paul**—decided to add a new member, **Trist Curless** of the a cappella group m-pact. *The Junction* is their first release with the new lineup. Essentially, it sounds just like the Manhattan Transfer—wisely, the group has held onto what made it work from the start. As always, the vocal harmonies are impeccable, the arrangements by producer **Mervyn Warren** are tight and the performances are just edgy enough without veering too far from the mainstream (although the production is, at times, more modernistic than the performances require). And just as they've always done, the group isn't afraid to seek material in unexpected places: "The Man Who Sailed Around His Soul" comes from the 1986 *Skylarking* album by Britain's XTC with new member Curless taking the lead vocal on a bright, swinging arrangement. And Rickie Lee Jones' "Ugly Man," with Siegel singing lead, is given a swanky, chic arrangement befitting of a classic-era Steely Dan concoction. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Spafford

For Amusement Only

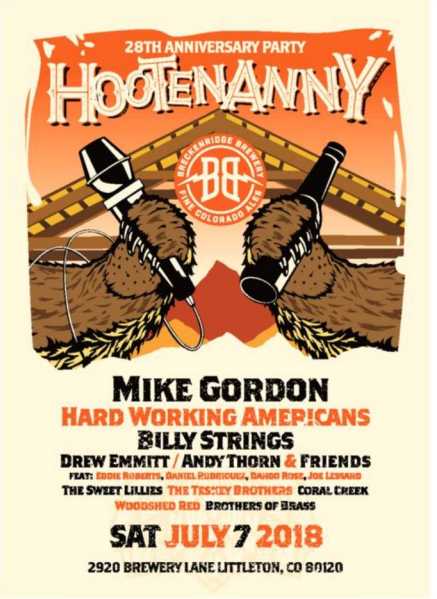
SELF-RELEASED

When a bunch of jamband fans get together, eventually, they will start to debate what the scene's "next generation" will look like. These days, the smart money is on **Spafford**, an Arizona-based quartet who have grown by leaps and bounds since their inception in 2010. The band's second proper studio album *For Amusement Only* finds them in an interesting position. The album mostly consists of material that's already been road-tested and refined, retroactively creating studio versions of songs that their increasingly large fanbase already know quite well. The reggae-fied album opener "Leave the Light On" has been part of the Spafford's live repertoire since 2012—on Hallowe-en 2017, the band even welcomed Matisyahu onstage for a version of the tune. "Mind's Unchained" and closer "Todd's Tots" have also been hailed as standout live tracks, with countless versions floating around the internet and traded among "Spaffnerds." However, the album does contain a few surprises. There are two completely new originals on *For Amusement Only*: "Fuel" and "When it Falls." The first takes **Brian Moss**' sharp guitar-rock riffs and boils them down to cerebral self-reflection, with the lyric "Be honestly anything you want to be." "When It Falls," on the other hand, is a certified party-jam, with an Umphrey's McGee-style prog-rock breakdown that suits the band very well; Moss, keyboardist **Andrew "Red" Johnson** and bassist **Jordan Fairless** blend their instruments together seamlessly. After the 2017 addition of drummer **Cameron Laforest**, the Spafford sound on this release is watertight without feeling overworked. In summation: *For Amusement Only* gives Spafford fans both old and new a blueprint. Its studio tracks are true to the live versions—not restrained—but cleaned up and ready to be amplified. *Raffaela Kenny-Cincotta*

Alexis Taylor

Beautiful Thing DOMINO

Alexis Taylor usually operates in two basic modes: sentimentality and silliness. With Hot Chip, he oscillates between both—from dance-rock meditations on friendship ("Brothers") to R. Kelly-styled ballads with lyrics like "Half nelson, full nelson, Willie Nelson" ("Wrestlers"). (Truly the full spectrum of human emotion.) On his own, he often operates in the first realm, stripping away playfulness to explore a more introspective persona. *Beautiful Thing*, his fourth solo LP, opens with the singer/producer in a full daydream mode, pondering "another life" in his boyish tenor over a sparse bass pulse, snarling feedback and warped acoustic guitar. In Hot Chip, the song would have probably been 10 bpm faster, with a dizzying synth climax—different project, different aim. Stretches of *Beautiful Thing* drift by in a shapeless haze, like the clattering electro-piano ballad "Roll on Blank Tapes." ("Drum machines have got no soul," he croons, proving that maxim correct in this context.) But the record, produced by DFA veteran **Tim Goldsworthy**, is much more dynamic than his past solo work, particularly on the second half: "Suspicious of Me" perks up the mood with a percolating art-funk groove; "I Feel You" nods to Paul McCartney via Wings with its vibraphone-laden arrangement; and "Oh Baby" is an unexpected blast of New Wave-era



JUNE CD SAMPLER

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1

JACK WHITE
"Corporation"
From the album *Boarding House Reach*
Third Man Records/Columbia Records

Jack White is one of the most prolific and renowned artists of the past two decades. The 12-time Grammy winner and co-founder of The White Stripes, The Raconteurs and The Dead Weather recently released his third solo album, *Boarding House Reach*, which marked his third consecutive No. 1 solo debut.

jackwhiteiii.com

2

SLIM WEDNESDAY
"No (So) Good"
From the album *Reptile Show*
Gemco Recording Group

Mix JoJo Hermann from Widespread Panic with The Dynamites and what do you get? Slim Wednesday, the day after Fat Tuesday—Southern psych-soul. Straight out of a Southern soul/rock/funk voodoo cauldron, *Reptile Show*, jumps from jam to deep -dish funk to New Orleans piano to troubadour soul to Toussaint-style gut bucket.

slimwednesday.com

3

PAA KOW
"Forced Landing"
From the album *Cookpot*
Self-released

Dubbed "Ghana's most artistic drummer" (Modern Ghana), Paa Kow (pronounced Pah-Ko), takes listeners on a journey that boldly explores the music of the African Diaspora by blending Ghanaian highlife with elements of jazz, funk and African pop to create an exceptional Afro-Fusion sound all his own.

paakowmusic.com

4

MAINLINE
"Relapse"
from the album *MainLine*
Self-released

An eight-piece funk/hip-hop/soul ensemble, MainLine takes the horns of a traditional New Orleans brass band and adds funky and hip-hop overtones from guitars, organ/keyboards, and drums. The brainchild of sousaphonist Edward Lee, MainLine was molded in the likeness of greats such as Earth, Wind & Fire, Chicago and The Roots. The group's repertoire includes original songs and arrangements of today's hits.

mainline504.com

5

BUDDHAGRAPH SPACESHIP
"Changes Over Me"
From the album *Buddhagraph Spaceship*
Self-Released

Buddhagraph Spaceship is an American rock band from Asheville, N.C. With a passion for creativity and the motivation to push boundaries by forming a bridge between acoustic and electronic improvisation, they blend elements of funk, jam, folk, bluegrass, gypsy jazz, Americana, rock, reggae and much more to achieve their eclectic sound.

buddhagraphspaceship.com

6

VICTOR WAINWRIGHT
"Money"
From the album *Victor Wainwright & The Train*
Ruf Records

Victor Wainwright & The Train twist boogie-woogie tradition and barrelhouse thrillers, driven by Victor's visceral piano style. He fearlessly explores the gamut of genres, from Latin flavors and New Orleans horns, to mellow near-psychedelia. It's a musical cocktail served up by Wainwright's inimitable gravel-flecked vocal.

victorwainwright.com

7

KENNY GEORGE BAND
"Storm Clouds Over Dallas"
From the album
Borrowed Trouble
Self-released

Tempered by the time they've spent on the road, Kenny George Band's latest album, *Borrowed Trouble*, looks at life, longing and relationships through the vast spectrum of constant tours and travel. It's melodic, it's measured and it's often gritty, but it's a sound that resonates as both tender and tenacious.

kennygeorgeband.com

8

BARROOM PHILOSOPHERS
"Angel in My Pocket"
Single
Self-released

Barroom Philosophers is a five-piece rock fusion band hailing from Syracuse, N.Y., rooted heavily in dub, blues, psychedelica and reggae. Formed in 2014, the band has been tirelessly honing their skills as songwriters and composers, while gaining fans through live shows in the Upstate New York circuit.

barroomphilosophers.com

9

ANDREW SHEPPARD
"Red Wine & White Roses"
From the album
Steady Your Aim
Wood River

Singer-songwriter Andrew Sheppard grew up in Hailey, Idaho in an extended musical family. His mother sang in rock and blues bands. As a kid, he went to his mom's rehearsals and shows, drawing in the music as a constant. Sheppard was playing bass in punk rock bands in high school and, by the age of 19, he picked up the guitar and started writing his own songs. Ten years later, he is poised to release his sophomore album, *Steady Your Aim* on March 23.

andrewsheppardmusic.com

10

VANESSA
"Drop the G"
From the album *Butterfly Feeling*
Self-released

This 32 year old knock-outCountry/Rock singer is making waves everywhere she sings. She is on the Top-10 of the National FMQB AC Chart, is on the Top-10 and has two No. 1 hits on the IMN Country Chart, and has an East Coast tour from June 7–July 30.

vanessalavoie.com

11

CHRIS EVES AND THE NEW NORMAL
"Green and Blue"
From the album *Find Your Way*
Self-released

Chris Eves and the New Normal blur the lines between rock, funk, blues and jam. They've performed with Zac Brown Band, Jon Fishman of Phish, Turkuaz, Gov't Mule, Cheap Trick and Gregg Allman, among others. Their debut album is available on digital media services, including Spotify, iTunes, SoundCloud and Pandora.

chrisevesandthenewnormal.com

12

PHERKAD
"My Friend" ft. Ben Wright
From the album *Learning to Fly Again*
Frogville Studios

Pherkad is a genre-bending, experimental jamband from Albuquerque, N.M. Their music has been described as "fractals for the musical soul." Pherkad is: "Cheese" (drummer/lead vocals), Zac Ramsey (keybord), Jason Bowers (guitar) and Chris Patchett (bass/vocals). These grooves will have your feet forging a path to the unknown.

facebook.com/pherkadmusic

13

EDITOR'S PICK: BLACKBERRY SMOKE
"I'll Keep Ramblin'" ft. Robert Randolph
From the album *Find a Light*
3 Legged Records/Thirty Tigers

Acclaimed American rock band Blackberry Smoke recently released their sixth studio album, *Find a Light*, to widespread praise. In addition to performing hundreds of headlining shows each year, the band has toured with artists including Zac Brown Band, Eric Church and ZZ Top, and has collaborated in the studio with Gregg Allman, Bob Weir and more.

blackberrysmoke.com

14

JAMOFF! WINNER: MARK FELDMAN'S LEVEL5
"Sybil"
From the EP *The Sybil*
Mutant Cat Records

Mark Feldman's LEVEL5 is an instrumental jamband. Their debut, *The Sybil EP*, is coming this summer on Mutant Cat Records. "Sybil," written by Oz Noy, was inspired by Feldman's experiences with multiple psycho ex-girlfriends. Personnel: Mark Feldman (drums), Oz Noy (guitar), Will Lee (bass) and Adam Klipple (keyboards).

level5music.com

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power-pop. As the album fades out with "Out of Time," an atmospheric wash of e-bow and Rhodes piano, the Hot Chip comparisons feel useless. Taylor has never sounded more like his own undefinable man. *Ryan Reed*

Byron Isaacs

Disappearing Man SELF-RELEASED

As one of the founders of the band Ollabelle and a touring member of the neo-folk outfit The Lumineers—not to mention his session work with Willie Nelson, Joan Baez, Roseanne Cash and a number of others—**Byron Isaacs** is known for his subtler tones and textures. Yet the bassist's first solo excursion comes across as surprisingly angular at times and unexpectedly ominous at others. Freed from any constraints, he takes on a more sinewy style and a decidedly emphatic approach. The album title alone hints at an unsettled scenario, but the barely masked jab at today's political posture on "Man of the Times" ("These times that we're living in puts you to the test/ How we're going to make it is anyone's guess") and the dire anguish expressed in "Losing You" and "Crazy Love" create a sense of unease and uncertainty that underscore a pervasive feel overall. Granted, there are moments of reassurance—the shimmering ballad "Summer," the gentle drift of "Gypsy Wind" and the easy allure of "Seeing Is Believing" in particular—but, mostly, there's more disturbance and upheaval here than those familiar with his earlier efforts might expect. That's not a bad thing; Isaacs deserves credit for daring to venture closer to the brink and avoiding complacency. Indeed, the edge and authority, especially in such songs as "Shadows," "Daddy's Farm" and the title track, ultimately allow for a compelling encounter. *Lee Zimmerman*

Lake Street Dive

Free Yourself Up NONESUCH

This Boston quartet first united 14 years ago as a bizarre venture into avant-garde country music. Now, armed with their polished sixth LP, that rootsy experimentation must feel like a foggy memory. *Free Yourself Up*, like 2016's *Side Pony*, is a subtly sophisticated soul-pop romp, led by the jazz-trained belting of frontwoman **Rachael Price** and the low-end thump of double-bassist **Bridget Kearney**. It's a malleable style they can gracefully bend into adult-contemporary jazz ("Shame, Shame, Shame"), twangy psych-rock ("Dude") and funky blues ("Red Light Kisses," highlighted by **Mike "McDuck" Olson**'s vintage clavinet and organ)—mostly because they're such strong players and arrangers. From the overdriven guitars of "You Are Free" to the fidgety 5/4 groove of "Hang On" to the purring vintage synths of "Baby, Don't Leave Me Alone With My Thoughts," these tracks are loaded with subtle surprises that transcend the "retro-soul" tag they're often saddled with. But they're also smart enough not to bury the lede: Price's smooth tone is the big-ticket attraction, and each track is loaded with hooks that showcase her raw talent. She revs up into a bluesy purr on "Good Kisser" and reaches back to her jazz roots on "Musta Been Something," a deft slow jam full of dramatic swoops and trills. While **Lake Street Dive** clearly course-corrected from their experimental early days, they never abandoned their instinct to blur boundaries. *Ryan Reed*

GUM

The Underdog SPINNING TOP

In the year 2018, it's almost impossible to create a signature musical vibe—not a style, per se, but a sonic atmosphere that others can easily pinpoint within seconds. Unfortunately for **GUM** mastermind **Jay "Gumby" Watson**, he happens to share a distinct aesthetic with his Tame Impala bandmate Kevin Parker, who's widely recognized as the chief visionary of modern psychedelia. The loping, muffled drum sounds, speaker-smothering phaser breaks and swirling vintage synths are so ingrained in Parker's writing and production that he may as well have registered them with the Australian patent office. The two musicians have worked together for almost a decade, both in Tame Impala and fellow psych outfit Pond, so it's fair to assume a certain degree of cross-pollination. But for Watson, the comparisons are lofty and unavoidable—and the trick is finding enough separation to build some character unique only to him. *The Underdog* has its un-Tamed moments: the deep-burning disco groove of "S.I.A.," the early-'80s drum machine of starry ballad "Serotonin" and the warbled electro-pop synths and mutated saxophone of closer "The Fear." But it's very difficult to shake the feeling that you've heard it all before—and very, very recently. Take "After All (From the Sun)," which—with its sparse drum groove and psych-soul guitar riff—is a dead ringer for Parker's 2015 anthem "Cause I'm a Man." Watson is a gifted sound-sculptor—he just needs to allow himself some creative breathing room. *Ryan Reed*

Albert Hammond Jr.

Francis Trouble RED BULL

Albert Hammond Jr.'s fourth solo album tackles an intensely dark subject—the stillborn death of his twin brother—yet the music itself contains a notable levity. Best known as the guitarist for The Strokes, **Hammond** has never veered away from personal topics on his records, using each track to create revelatory, introspective moments that elevate the songs beyond requisite garage-rock numbers. Of course, this album isn't a literal discussion of his lost twin—it's more about how that loss has shaped Hammond Jr. in the years since. "Strangers," a bouncing rocker with a Beatles-esque tone, remarks "How strange the feeling to be strangers/ who strain for feeling," while "Stop and Go" is a sweetly crooned ballad, reflecting bittersweetly on the past as Hammond Jr. sings "We made a plan/ but had no time." The record, in a lot of ways, feels vintage and classic, with each track embracing a slightly different aesthetic. It's playful and vibrant, even when Hammond Jr. centers on themes of loss, and catchy tracks like "Harder, Harder, Harder" reveal a compelling side of the musician that doesn't always come out. It's a surprisingly fun album for one that's based on such somber subject matter, suggesting that rock-and-rollers don't always have to go super dark to find inspiration. Considering that he survived while his brother did not seems to have given Hammond Jr. a new sense of vigor, both in art and in life, yielding high-energy riffs and thoughtful, but not overly pensive lyrics. Tragedy doesn't have to sound tragic. *Emily Zemler*

Toubab Krewe

Stylo TOUBAB KREWE

Although they formed more than a dozen years ago, **Toubab Krewe** have only recorded two albums prior to *Stylo* and the last one, *TK2*, came

Ear Crystals BY RICHARD GEHR

The search for other-world audio gems

Hooray for Bollywood. Opera-trained singer **Kamala Sankaram** sounds like the genetically enhanced clone child of over-the-top vocalists Yma Sumac, Beverly Sills and Lata Mangeshkar on her band **Bombay Rickey**'s wonderful new *Electric Bhairavi* (Cowboys & Indians). Like the Bollywood movies that inspire tracks like "Kohraa," which playback legend Mangeshkar sang in a vintage Indian horror film, Bombay Rickey gleefully fuses your favorite outer-limits styles into an appealingly giddy goulash that you'd find in the same bin as Cambodia-steeped surf rockers **Dengue Fever**. Bernard Hermann goes cumbia in "Frantic," a saxophone salutes Sumac in Rickey's cover of the Peruvian-American diva's "Gopher Mambo" and sitars conquer the earth in the raga-rocking "Sa_4_5."

Film at 11. It may not be the great American opioid folk opera you suspect he's contemplating, but singer-songwriter **Simone Felice**'s *The Projector* (New York Pro) compassionately romanticizes the misery and paranoia of life in these not-so-great-again United Surveillance States. Basically just Felice and his guitar, augmented occasionally by an angelic choir, *The Projector* contains a lyrically elegant *Our Town* of characters, defined as much by the substances they consume as anything else they've got going on. *The Projector* may not achieve the haunted perfection of *The Duke & the King*, but it still testifies to the power of smart folk realism.

Gotta light? **Dan Weiss** consecrates 2017's finest hour of television on *Starebaby* (Pi). In the 14-minute track "Episode 8," the India-inspired jazz drummer and his experimental new doom-metal band—guitarist **Ben Monder**, bassist **Trevor Dunn** and keyboardists **Craig Taborn** and **Matt Mitchell**—conjure the nuclear explosion, shambling woodsmen and Trent Reznor guest appearance that made that particular slice of *Twin Peaks: The Return* so thick and gooey. Heaviness abounds. Dig the pummel and fury of "The Memory of My Memory," the wailing Monder moment in "Cry Box" and the elegant piano duet in "Badalamenti," which celebrates the *Peaks*' moody musical patriarch.

More Hooker than Hendrix. For a minute there, **Omar "Bombino" Moctar** was the guitar-slinger standout among the growing group of Tuareg acts like Tinariwen and Tamikrest. Unfortunately, his albums have never done his onstage electricity justice, and *Deran* (Partisan) isn't an exception. Vamping through fairly mellow variations on a regional groove, the hypnotic *assouf*-style guitarist rarely cuts loose—as anyone who's heard the 13-minute live version of "Tigrawahi Tikma" (Bring Us Together) on *Songs for Desert Refugees*, or seen him in person, knows he damn well can.

Love trance. Post-minimalist primitivos **Oneida** deserve more credit for their songs. On the Brooklyn quintet's magnificent new *Romance* (Joyful Noise), these include the Zen mystique of "Economy Travel," the compact freak-out of "Cedars," the hypnotically pulsating lounge lizardry of "Good Lie" and the Ramones-y "Cockfight" ("I'm in a...*cockfight!*"). Oneida uses lyrics as bonus information in their manly skein of bravado drumming and avant-punk guitars and keyboards. The long-form tracks they're better known for consist of motorik hippie dream "Lay of the Land" and "Shepherd's Axe," an 18-minute improvisation that brings this love affair to an indeterminate conclusion.

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out way back in 2010 and not much has changed since then. A couple of lineup shifts have not altered the group's singular goal of seamlessly straddling the line between West African traditional music, played on instruments like kora and ngoni, and whatever can be done on Western guitars, drums, keyboard, etc. It's a mix that comes to Toubab Krewe naturally–this isn't some one-off lark that flirts with cultural appropriation. It's all that TK does, and they do it gracefully. Sometimes they find the sweet spot without even incorporating the African instrumentation: *Stylo*'s opener, "That Damn Squash," credits only acoustic and electric guitars, Casio organ, bass and drums/percussion. The song's African-ness is implied by the players, not ascribed to specific tools in their arsenal. When "Night Shade," the next track, kicks in, this time with **Justin Perkins** moving over to the ngoni, there isn't a jolting difference–you know you're hearing the same band. Toubab's great strength is that, once you are enveloped by their groove, how they are making it seems irrelevant. Each of the eight tracks on *Stylo* establishes an individual personality–some more melodic in nature, others piling on the polyrhythms. "Lafia" comes on like a herd, punk-rock in its intensity, while the title track is content to take its time and spread itself out and is more congenial in nature. So too is the album-closing "Southern Tracks," playing it cool with the laconic openness of classic dub. No one's in a hurry here. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Kimbra

Primal Heart WARNER BROS.

Kimbra has always deftly balanced the stylistic halves of art-pop, infusing experimental arrangements into verse-chorus tunes. On her first two LPs, she offered a sonic twist for every hummable ear-worm, gleefully sashaying through vintage R&B, cabaret jazz, electronica and funk as if flipping through record store racks. (Who else could recruit neo-soul crooner **Bilal**, Muse frontman **Matt Bellamy**, jazz-funk virtuoso bassist **Thundercat** and The Mars Volta's **Omar Rodriguez-Lopez** for the same LP? And, more important, who else could mingle those disparate cameos in a way that felt natural?) But Kimbra's quest for adventure is more muted on her latest album, *Primal Heart*, as she zooms in on a seductive, contemporary electro-pop style. The sense of surprise that defined her previous work has dissipated, but a sure-footed songcraft remains intact: Aided by a stable of producers, including **John Congleton**, she croons over milky synth pads and booming electronics that emphasize the seductiveness of her voice. "Everybody Knows" is an instant banger, earning maximum traction from a two-chord synth pulse and eerie xylophone; besides the goofy, borderline-rapped verses, the **Skrillex**-produced "Top of the World" is a master-class of minimalist electro-R&B, gradually building tension with hand-drum rhythms, chanted hooks and distorted synth eruptions. It would be easy to write off Kimbra's pop evolution. That would also be unwise. Rather than coming across like her "sellout" moment, *Primal Heart* feels like a radio-tailored victory lap. *Ryan Reed*

Bernard Purdie & Friends

Cool Down SUGAR ROAD

Bernard Purdie has played drums on so many recordings, by such a mind-numbing list of artists (Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Herbie Hancock, Dizzy Gillespie, Steely Dan, and on and on) that it's easy to forget he also records under his own name–at least 25 albums as a leader. *Cool Down* is his first new one since 2009 and, in his late-'70s, Purdie hasn't lost any of his trademark force and smarts. From the first NOLA-centric drum licks of the opening "Elevate" through the blues-infused "Stranded" ballad that closes it out–the latter fronted by **Cyril Neville**'s heart-melting vocal–this is one impressive slab of classic funk and soul. Recorded live in the studio in Brooklyn, *Cool Down*, initially released for Record Store Day, is something of a tour through Purdie's favored grooves. He's got help from a new generation of jam-embraced groovers: keyboardist **Ivan Neville**, New Mastersounds bassist **Pete Shand** and Pimps of Joytime guitarist **Brian J** (the latter two also served as co-producers). It's a tight unit with a well-honed sense of the various branches of vintage R&B. "Deep in Love," featuring vocalist **Mayteana Morales**, also from Pimps of Joytime, is the type of midtempo good-time soul that would've been all over soul radio in the early-'70s, while the title track–its weighty bass giving Purdie just what he needs to burrow deep inside–could pass for a lost Funkadelic jam. *Jeff Tamarkin*

A Perfect Circle

Eat the Elephant BMG

So there's a funny thing that happened about the status of the next Tool album amid all the back and forth on the internet these last few months. A fully formed fourth LP from **A Perfect Circle**–the long dormant supergroup led by the LA metal band's frontman **Maynard James Keenan**–emerged from the darkness

and confusion. Fourteen years after *eMotive*, the longest-running version of the band—composed of Kennan and his longtime APC co-sponsor **Billy Howerdel** on guitar, along with rhythm guitarist **James Iha**, bassist **Matt McJunkins** and drummer **Jeff Friedl**—has finally become immortalized on acetate with *Eat the Elephant*. And nearly 20 years after forming, the best A Perfect Circle lineup has dropped the best A Perfect Circle album yet, establishing a level of pop craftsmanship that you never expected. The piano looms quite large across this 11-song journey, adding an element of light to Keenan's voice that's unlike any album before it, making the slow-moving romance of the opening title track particularly striking right off the bat. Deeper in, more elements uncharacteristic of the group's three prior works reveal themselves in satisfying ways—the mid-'80s Cure-style guitar progressions that punctuate "The Contrarian" and "By and Down the River" and the low-end crash chords that rolled off an old copy of Depeche Mode's *Black Celebration*—and are surely the markings of producer **Dave Sardy**, adding the mixing mastery he brought to the music of Spoon, Autolux and LCD Soundsystem here. But perhaps no other song on *Elephant* speaks better to the stronger pop sensibilities of A Perfect Circle in 2018 than "So Long and Thanks for the Fish," a Rush-meets-TVT-era-Guided By Voices soundclash that we never knew we needed. The status of the new Tool LP remains a mystery, but if it's even half as good as *Eat the Elephant*, then it will be worth the wait. ***Ron Hart***

Aaron Comess

Sculptures SELF-RELEASED

Too often, albums that shift the drummer to the role of leader sound like albums made by drummers: The emphasis on rhythm is disproportionate to what the music requires. Then there are those drummers who take the opposite tack, de-emphasizing the rhythmic component to the point of ignoring it, as if to say, "Yes, I happen to play the drums but I'm about much more than that." On *Sculptures*, **Aaron Comess**—who has drummed for the Spin Doctors throughout their career and whose credits include Joan Osborne, his own combos and others—looks in a different direction altogether for inspiration. While Comess' drumming is prominent, it's not dominant. He serves as support largely for something called Samchillian synthesizer, piloted by **Leon Gruenbaum** and described on the latter's website as "a relativistic music keyboard, a patented MIDI controller" also called the Samchillian Tip Tip Tip Cheeepeeeee. There's a lot of technological stuff you can look up if you really want to but, for our purposes, what matters is that the music they create—their input augmented by electric guitar, Fender Rhodes and bass (with a vocal on one track)—is hypnotic and beguiling. The cheap way out would be to use an adjective like atmospheric or a noun like soundscape in order to give the impression that this is passive music, not intended for intent listening. Yet the instrumental tunes like "Soundcheck-Oceans," the title track and "Dogs" are fully involving, grabbing the listener's attention in spite of themselves, while others, particularly the appropriately titled "The Beast," are wholly in-your-face, the polar opposite of chill. *Jeff Tamarkin*

OFF THE TRACKS

The Judy Chops

Love Is the Answer

SELF-RELEASED

Mostly recorded in the backwoods of central Virginia, **The Judy Chops'** fourth studio LP *Love Is the Answer* carries a lot of Southern traditions (*a lot*); from soul to funk to rockabilly, the band jumps from genre to genre on almost every song. Even opener "Q 4 U," sounds like a wacky vaudevillian romp and, over 11 tracks, The Judy Chops' variety show marches onward. The septet—consisting of **William Howard** (electric guitar, vocals), **Molly Murphy** (hollowbody guitar, vocals), **Sally Murphy** (banjo, vocals), **Mike Pressel** (trumpet), **Rachel Smith** (baritone saxophone), **Jims Hinkle** (bass) and **Jess Bergh** (drums)—clearly enjoys navigating through all of these sonic changes. However, they're at their most dynamic on the feel-good, soul-funk single "Lay My Love." In fact, the song appears twice on *Love Is the Answer*. The first version is a mid-album horn-heavy groove, filled with the stylings of Stax Records. The second is an a capella composition, with only the group's voices to keep the tune afloat. It may seem like the stripped-down version was a last-minute throw-in, but these four minutes and 20 seconds of lush harmonies put the band's sonic unity on full display. Sure, a cover of the Screamin' Jay Hawkins' 1956 favorite "I Put a Spell on You" adds yet another dimension to the release, and "Spit It Out," sounds like a lost Blues Brothers tune, but of all of the masks that The Judy Chops try on throughout *Love Is the Answer*, the two sides of "Lay My Love," present this band at their most real. If it were a different time, then "Lay My Love" A and B could be pressed on two sides of a 45, with pleading vocals reverberating on high-fidelity vinyl. ***Raffaela Kenny-Cincotta***

Rita Coolidge

Safe in the Arms of Time BLUE ÉLAN

For many of her fans from the '70s, when she cut duets with then-husband Kris Kristofferson and scored Top 10 hits like her cover of Jackie Wilson's "Higher and Higher" and its follow-up "We're All Alone," **Rita Coolidge** hasn't exactly maintained a high profile lately. Then, in 2016, she published her memoir, *Delta Lady*, and started thinking it was time to return to recording. *Safe in the Arms of Time* includes both well-chosen covers and new Coolidge co-compositions, among them a pair of tunes written with **Keb' Mo'** and singer-songwriter **Jill Colucci** (one of which, "Walking on Water," features a Mo' co-vocal), and another co-penned with Heartbreaker **Stan Lynch** and **Joe Hutto**. The latter, "You Can Fall in Love," is particularly reminiscent of Coolidge's classic sound, a mid-tempo, piano-centric tune espousing the joy of rekindling a long-dormant relationship. Nostalgia is a presence throughout: Coolidge recorded the album at LA's Sunset Sound, where she made many of her early recordings, and several of the musicians and songwriters' names will certainly be familiar. "Doing Fine Without You," co-written by **Russ Kunkel** and **Graham Nash**, is a gutsy take-a-hike tune whose slide-guitar lines from **Joey Landreth** give it a serious added dollop of crunch. But this isn't the '70s—Coolidge, in fact, is *in* her 70s now—and *Safe in the Arms of Time* is a statement of now, not then, a return to form from a voice we'd hadn't realized we'd missed all these years. *Jeff Tamarkin*

The Nels Cline 4

Currents, Constellations BLUE NOTE

Nels Cline has always been a few different people rolled into one monster guitar player. For most, he's the guy in Wilco bringing the edge to the band's Americana since 2004. But he's equally at home playing punk-rock, experimental/avant-garde music of various leanings and, since the start of his career, jazz that seeks to escape conventionalism. In *Room*, his 2014 collaboration with fellow progressive guitarist **Julian Lage**, Cline met up with a particularly simpatico traveler. Although the guitarists' styles were at the core miles apart, they brought out new ideas in each other. It's a truly terrific album. So too is *Currents, Constellations*, on which Cline and Lage add a rhythm section, acoustic bassist **Scott Colley** and drummer **Tom Rainey**, to the mix. Its eight tracks, all but one written by Cline (the outlier is Carla Bley's "Temporarily"), are fiery and fierce, and tightly composed but malleable. Cline and Lage delight in chasing one another, one leading the other to places he might not normally head on his own. It's all there in "Furtive," the lead track, which gives the rhythm section a head start before the guitars enter the picture. Once they do, out of the gate, they're running, complementary while remaining stoically independent. It's that way on all of the hotter tunes, but it's also that way on the languid, moody ballad "As Close As That" and the airy, open-ended Bley number as well. As for the rhythm section, they don't come much more skilled, but this show, as in *Room*, is always about what happens when two of the world's most stimulating guitarists of the present epoch allow themselves to let the moment take them where it will. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

A Perfect Circle

The Nels Cline 4

Dana Buoy
Ice Glitter Gold EVERLOVING

"Things change," Lucy Gutteridge tells Val Kilmer breathily in 1984's immortal *Top Secret!* "People change. Hairstyles change." So it is with *Ice Glitter Gold*, the second full-length from **Dana Buoy**, the Oregon-based duo of **Dana Janssen** and **Justin Miller**. A half-decade since Janssen's last album drumming and writing songs with the on-ice Akron/Family, that band's cosmic woolliness is in short supply, almost fully replaced with a DIY slickness that flexes for club beats while still feeling resolutely personal. The closest the duo get to Akron's head-spinning ways is on the album's opening track and lead single, "Twisted Sky," a throb of drums, alien falsettos, and rolling fuzzed-bass vibrations with an undulating horizon-sized chorus. "Bloom," too, goes all in with overloaded neon and crammed-in melodies emerging between the crazy rhythms alongside some excellent and effective old-fashioned "woo-woo"s. Elsewhere, the record veers heavily into the pop realms, though not always successfully, with the ethereal album-closing "Only One" turning from a gentle Auto-Tuned lullaby into something more like a synth-dripping power ballad. "Let Go Awhile" reaches an ethereal valley of stacked vocals before a Prince-like guitar coda. Listeners' mileages may vary depending on their proximity to (and excitement about) the proverbial dance floor channeled on the title track, and/or sexing jams like "Whatever." Dana Buoy sails a wide ocean of sound, seemingly docking for now at a private disco floating in some European sea, the pirate-radio stations bobbing in the distance. ***Jesse Jarnow***

Johnny Irion
Driving Friend BLACKWING

Johnny Irion is nearly always thought of as half of a duo—the other being his wife **Sarah Lee Guthrie** (youngest daughter of Arlo). Together they've released several albums and have toured prolifically. Because that's been his main concentration, Irion hasn't cut an album on his own in more than a decade, and *Driving Friend* is a welcomed opportunity to revisit him as a solo artist. Irion doesn't have any interest in using the platform to demonstrate some hitherto unknown, quirky other side: This music will be familiar to anyone who's followed his work, falling largely into what's usually described as folk-rock, Americana or some related derivative. But if Irion doesn't venture far from his comfort zone, that's perfectly OK because these 10 songs will invite you back again and again. Produced by The Mother Hips' **Tim Bluhm** (who adds guitar, keys and vocals), and featuring guest contributions from Guthrie, Dawes' **Taylor** and **Griffin Goldsmith**, pianist **James Raymond** (David Crosby's son) and others, *Driving Friend* was cut on 24-track tape, which gives the recording a sincere, homey feel that flies in the face of so much of today's sterile, overproduced music. "Cabin Fever," the first track released from the set, is swampy in an early Dr. John kind of way, while "Palm Springs" and the title track, rich in acoustic guitars and vocal harmonies, bring to mind any number of SoCal classics of the '70s. And "Angels Fly," with luxuriant instrumentation and layered voices swirling around Irion's honeyed lead vocal, is a reminder that soft-rock once wasn't a curse word. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Eleanor Friedberger
Rebound FRENCHKISS

Since The Fiery Furnaces went on hiatus on 2011, **Eleanor Friedberger** has unveiled three solo albums, the latest of which emerged in 2016. That album, *Nice View*, was charmingly quirky and deeply personal, two sensibilities that her latest, *Rebound*, also embrace. On this one, however, Friedberger ventures into new stylistic territory when it comes to the sounds, focusing on sparsely ambient backdrops and hushed synth melodies. The musician, who is half Greek, wrote much of the album while in Greece and took inspiration from her heritage and culture when creating the songs. The album is named for a nightclub in Athens (not, as one might assume, for the time after a breakup), which may explain the sultry, moody vibe that pervades the music and feels almost clouded in wafting cigarette smoke. "Are We Good?" stands out as a buoyant indie-pop number that allows the singer to unleash her intimately wrought croon as she moans, "Are we good? Are we good? Are we good?" "In Between Stars," a chirping, propulsive tune, has an instant hook in its shimmering chorus, while "Nice to Be Nowhere" pares down the music to it an evocative ballad. It's clear that Friedberger is unaffected by pressures outside herself, or by a desire to please the listener. Her songs, both here and on prior releases, are wholly—and happily—her own. They reflect a thoughtful, careful songwriter with something to say, which is a sincere and welcome relief in a world of overwrought pop productions and orchestrated lyrical messages. ***Emily Zemler***

The Weight Band
World Gone Mad THE WEIGHT BAND

They call their music "The Woodstock Sound" and they don't mean the festival. The players who comprise **The Weight Band**—their name is a giveaway—have deep ties to the music most closely associated with the Upstate New York burg and its most famous musical spawn. Particularly, guitarist/mandolinist **Jim Weider**, a native of the town, spent years playing guitar for the post-Robbie Robertson incarnation of The Band and remained a musical partner of Levon Helm's until the latter's death in 2012. The album, their debut, is in fact dedicated to Helm, Rick Danko and Richard Manuel. But that's not to imply that The Weight Band is a full-on tribute project. Although the arrangements share blatant similarities to the style of their chief inspiration—"Remedy," the live bonus track, would not have been out of place on *Stage Fright* or on the stage of *The Last Waltz*—the quintet (which also features keyboardist/horn man **Marty Grebb**, keyboardist **Brian Mitchell**, bassist **Albert Rogers** and drummer **Michael Bram**) has fashioned its own take on the music, which they first performed in Helm's barn five years ago. Two tracks, "Common Man" and "You're Never Too Old to Rock 'n' Roll," credit Helm as a co-writer, and "Day of the Locusts" was originally tucked away on Dylan's 1970 *New Morning* set. But "I Wish You Were Here Tonight" and "Heat of the Moment" detour just far enough away from the source to convince a listener that The Weight Band has the goods to expand in other directions, and their spirited workout on Garcia-Hunter's "Deal," sung by guest Jackie Greene (who also contributes snazzy slide guitar), is a swampy beast that finds its own way even while managing to honor both the Dead and The Band. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Pretty Gritty
Seven Year Itch CREATIVE AND DREAMS MUSIC NETWORK

Johnny and June. George and Tammy. Sonny and Cher. Throughout the annals of popular music, it's been the call and response of male and female voices intertwined—singing in harmony and providing a counter measure—that has always added drama to the dynamic. **Sarah Wolff** and **Blaine Heinonen** effectively emulate that tradition, and while they sometimes use that interplay and intent to extend a song—their call-and-response take on Tim Hardin's "If I Were a Carpenter" offers an extreme example—they can also tow tradition, merging their voices in reverent ways. (Their exacting read of the Everly Brothers' well-aged standard "All I Have to Do Is Dream," for example.) Mostly though, the pair is at their best when weaving their vocals into songs where there's a clear sense of trauma and turbulence. "I miss the feeling of two hearts beating in perfect time," the two lament on the affecting breakup ballad "Love Don't Live Here Anymore." Likewise, the tempestuous tug of war that ensues in the songs "Bone to Pick" and "Something's Gotta Give" suggests that the duo's real strength lies in their ability to reflect the push and pull that leads to everyday acrimony. The ability to sing in tandem is one thing, but the tug and tension between the two adds authenticity. There are sweeter songs in the set of course—"Come What May" and the Everlys tune in particular—but, overall, the aptly named **Pretty Gritty** doesn't hesitate in sharing the yin with their yang. ***Lee Zimmerman***

Speedy Ortiz
Twerp Verse CARPARK

Massachusetts quartet **Speedy Ortiz** blasted out ahead of a crowded wave of scrappy, indie-rock guitar bands in the early 2010s (surfing alongside Bully, Parquet Courts, LVL UP and others), largely thanks to frontwoman **Sadie Dupuis**' vocals—unsure but bold, imperfect and emotional. On the band's third official album *Twerp Verse*, there's a newfound punky power behind her winding, echoing melodies, making for Speedy Ortiz's most immediately lovable music to date. It kicks off with "Buck Me Off," with Dupuis singing about her year "bookended by booty pics I never posted" before the guitars fly off the rails and explode in spectacularly powerful fashion, and she proclaims, "I compete with the devil. Better find a way to top me." Those are bold fighting words from a songwriter who's called her own early work "lovey dovey." *Twerp Verse* won't

get confused as heartfelt fluff for sure: Here are 11 tracks that sizzle and crunch with more immediacy than we've ever seen from the band. Even "Backslidin'," a tune that creepily crawls along on spindly guitars, ignites into a tidal wave chorus. (Dupuis is backsliding "into hell," for the record.) On "Villain," she casts aside any bullshit gray area of consent. "'I wanna know what kind of porn you like.' He asks me these questions: Did he earn the right? No way," she sings, snarling. *Twerp Verse* is the sound of an excellent songwriter flexing growing muscles, with her band providing the firepower to match. *Justin Jacobs*

Meshell Ndegeocello

Ventriloquism NAÏVE

Never one to shirk a challenge, **Meshell Ndegeocello** made some waves earlier this year when she released her devotional version of Prince's mournful ballad "Sometimes It Snows in April." Among the Purple One's hardcore acolytes, the song is an untouchable classic, and although Meshell has touted Prince throughout her career as a key influence on her own music, in 2014, she resurrected a beef with him over his return to Warner Brothers that didn't sit too well with his fanbase, and hasn't since. Regardless, the song is a centerpiece of her latest covers project *Ventriloquism*, and rightfully so. Going all the way back to her 1993 debut *Plantation Lullabies*, Ndegeocello has alchemized the collective essence of hip-hop, funk and soul into something uniquely hers: a complete realignment of the *Vibe*-era "mack diva" aesthetic, stitched through with a wealth of incisive commentary on sex, gender, power dynamics and the Afrocentric (and Afrofuturist) experience. That sounds like a mouthful, but somehow she gives it a voice even when she's playing other people's music. Her take on Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam's '80s bubblegum dance floor hit "I Wonder If I Take You Home" is stone-funky self-determination-as-foreplay, while The System's "Don't Disturb This Groove" somehow sounds dreamier and more lovestruck than the original. With an outstanding crew of musicians on board (guitarist **Chris Bruce**, keyboardist **Jebin Bruni** and drummer **Abraham Rounds**), she can even pull the seemingly immovable tech-funk stomp of George Clinton's "Atomic Dog" into strange new cosmic vistas of deep-space blues–not an easy feat with such a game-changing lodestone so firmly locked in its time and place. But forget the risk or reward; Ndegeocello's willingness to take on any musical goal she sets for herself is usually more than enough. *Bill Murphy*

Eels

The Deconstruction E WORKS/PIAS

Hard to believe it's been more than 20 years since **Mark Oliver Everett** first broke out with "Novocaine for the Soul," the leadoff single from **Eels**' debut *Beautiful Freak* and a perfect encapsulation of Everett's gripping love affair with his own misanthropy. As self-referential as E (the pseudonym he took on early in his solo career) has been over the course of a dozen albums, somehow, he always offers a portal of accessibility, whether it's in the admirable craft of his indie-pop earworms or in the vivid honesty of his lyrics, which often linger over tales of broken relationships, personal tragedy, death obsession–and, sometimes, redemption. *The Deconstruction* came together as a response to a world gone nuts, as E himself has put it so, in a sense, there's a positive and even humorous spin to the upbeat, cathartic pop of "Today Is the Day" or the throwback '60s go-go rocker "You Are the Shining Light," replete with handclaps and fuzz guitar. Overall, the album's mood doesn't quite surpass the sunny disposition of 2013's unironically titled *Wonderful, Glorious*, but with producer **Mickey Petralia** back in the fold (he last worked with Eels on the brutally stark *Electro-Shock Blues*), E at least *sounds* like he's enjoying the process. "Sweet Scorched Earth," for all its apocalyptic gloom, pivots on the lyric "I love that you're my best friend and my wife, and I love our little family and our life," while able-bodied contributions from longtime bandmates **Koool G Murder** (bassist **Kelly Logsdon**) and **P-Boo** (guitarist **Mike Sawitzke**) give even an ostensible downer like "Be Hurt" a noticeable lift. Yes, we get the dire imagery that we've come to expect from an Eels album, but what still carries the day is E's guileless knack for stringing together instantly memorable melodies. *Bill Murphy*

Anna Burch

Quit the Curse POLYVINYL

Most recently, **Anna Burch** made her mark as co-lead singer in Failed Flowers and, before that, as longtime backing singer in Frontier Ruckus–both eclectic and indie-minded rock bands that emerged from the ever-thriving (and relentlessly evolving) scenes in Michigan's big college towns of Ann Arbor and East Lansing. With a proving ground like that behind her, it's no wonder that her solo debut captures the multicolored moods of a seasoned songwriter. *Quit the Curse* is rife with songs steeped in heartbreak ("Tea-Soaked Letter"), drug-fueled alienation ("Asking for a Friend") and regret over past transgressions ("In Your Dreams"), and while it would be trite to call the album "confessional," there's a definite sense of vulnerability being conceded in lyrics like "You've got all the power once again; I try to fight but I'm stuck in your spin," from the title track, or in the healing of old wounds in "What I Want." Musically and sonically, Burch manages to channel a breezy mix of garage-rock and psychedelic pop–thanks, in no small part, to the mixing talents of **Collin Dupuis**, whose credits include Angel Olsen, Lana Del Rey, Valerie June and more–with a backing band that includes multi-instrumentalist **Paul Cherry**, whose own oddball pop debut *Flavour* somehow dovetails with Burch's hauntingly quirky aesthetic. Her music won't exactly brighten your day, but it might help you get through it, which is what makes *Quit the Curse* such a curious and engaging songbook. *Bill Murphy*

Slim Wednesday

Reptile Show GEMCO

The spirit of New Orleans runs deep in **Jojo Hermann**'s **Slim Wednesday**. The Widespread Panic keyboardist has performed New Orleans music with guitarist **Bill Elder**, who is best known as **Leo Black**, for almost a decade. Since christening the band **Slim Wednesday** in early 2017, the group has toured regularly, playing clubs and crawfish boils alike. Slow-burner "You Want Some Love" kicks off the band's first studio album *Reptile Show*. It starts as a mellow blues drawl but, by the end, the band's multi-part horn section lifts the tune to new heights, parading down Bourbon Street, cocktail in hand. And while the NOLA sound is expected from this outfit, there are a number of surprises within *Reptile Show*'s eight tracks. "Stone Lover," for example, has a hazy, psychedelic wash reminiscent of the more mind-altering sounds of '60s. Unsurprisingly, Hermann surrounds himself with a number of talented cats on this release, mostly pulling form the Nashville soul outfit The Dynamites. (Elder on guitar, **Greg Bryant** on bass, **Ben Clark** on trumpet and **Kevin Mabin** on drums, with **Jonathan Jackson** and **Jovan Quallo** supplying plenty of sax.) Namely, Hermann's horn section shines throughout *Reptile Show*, from the bombastic, Meters-influenced funk of "No (So) Good" to the Dr. John groove of "Leigh-Cheri's Dilemma." (Adding a layer of academia, the latter pulls its title from the main character of the 1980 postmodern fairy tale, *Still Life with Woodpecker*.) Title track "Reptile Show" definitely wins the award for "Most Likely to Be Busted Out in a Widespread Panic Set." Jimmy Herring would do wonders with its sultry guitar riffs, and Hermann's piano solo could, and should, be a revelation in the live setting. However, you'd be shortchanging Slim Wednesday by regarding it as a WSP offshoot. Sharing vocal duties and, in turn, the spotlight, Hermann lets his band off the leash on this record, free to do their thing. In other words, *Reptile Show* isn't about Hermann, it's about the lively collective he's managed to put together. Like the lyrics of pseudo-political album closer "Go Ahead," the musicians push each other toward musical excellence: "There ain't nothing wrong with gettin' funky in the daylight. Tell your story strong, don't let anybody tell you not to sing." *Raffaela Kenny-Cincotta*

Slim Wednesday

Twin Shadow

Caer REPRISE

George Lewis Jr. is an R&B crooner with an art-pop heart: He has the raw charisma and vocal command to pack stadiums alongside Miley Cyrus, but his experimental production tactics keep him on the indie sidelines. On his debut Twin Shadow LP, 2010's *Forget*, Lewis Jr. was a figurehead of the spaced-out chillwave movement, but every album since has tiptoed closer to the mainstream. He continues down that path with *Caer* (Spanish for "to fall"), embracing the sexiest, smoothest side of his songwriting. It's an evolution similar to The Weeknd, another soulful singer/producer with an artsy streak. "Sympathy," laced with digital strings and a clapping programmed beat that could pass for DJ Mustard, is a representative

banger; on the other end of the spectrum, there's the moody "18 Years," a neon-tinted slow jam worthy of the "first kiss at the prom" scene from a retro coming-of-age rom-com. Lewis Jr. is serious about this pop shit, and the plainest evidence is recruiting Fleetwood Mac disciples **Haim** for a zestful cameo on the palm-muted New Wave highlight "Saturdays." But he hasn't completely abandoned his inner tinkerer: Take the atmospheric guitar solo and rain effects of "Twins – Theme," the funky slap-bass of "Obvious People" or the abrupt bursts of tape hiss of "Little Woman." By album No. 10, it's quite possible that Lewis Jr. will be headlining an arena tour. Let's just hope he brings some of this lingering edginess along with him. *Ryan Reed*

The Sea and Cake

Any Day THRILL JOCKEY

On *Any Day*, their 11th long player, Chicago stalwarts **The Sea and Cake** continue to make intricate and jazzy lite-rock sound deceptively easy. Emerging from the Chicago underground in the early-'90s with a blend of balmy exotica, proggy time signatures, indie-rock swing and colorfully evocative lyrics, the core trio of **Archer Prewitt**, **John McEntire** and **Sam Prekop** sound as elegant as ever on the new recording. Like each release before it in the band's two-decade-spanning catalog, it's an easy album to hear–all gentle rhythms, airy vocals and smart pop sense. On songs like the unbearably gorgeous "Paper Window" and the light-on-its-feet "Occurs," the band displays a mastery of mood and tone. But anyone with a nice reverb unit and a couple Brazilian rhythms in their pocket can make sweetly loungey sounds–it's the sense of propulsion underneath that elevates the trio, and it's a powerful understanding of tension that makes these 10 songs worth revisiting over and over. "Still I'm broken/ waiting for sublime/ please don't go," Prekop sings over Prewitt's plucked electric guitar (the best tone in the game, it's worth mentioning), churning standup bass and a stuttering McEntire beat on the title track, highlighting the murky way that "any day" can refer to the mundaneness of an average experience or the uncertain promise of something yet to come. Prekop's lyrics hinge on open space, and in those abstractions and suggestions, the band carves out a space that feels as challenging as it does soothing. *Jason P. Woodbury*

Holy Wave

Adult Fear

REVERBERATION APPRECIATION SOCIETY

Trumpian subtexts stick to everything in 2018, including music. The first song on **Holy Wave**'s new record is called "Nation In Regress," and one suspects that some of the titular adult fear relates to the current occupant of the White House. The second track, "How Was I Supposed to Know," has a line about seeing a therapist and writing a letter to one's state representative: This is a common experience for many Americans today, as a direct result of 2016 election. One could easily miss the current-events anxiety and unease, because the music of this El Paso, Texas quintet has a dreamy nostalgic wash to it. Early Pink Floyd comes to mind. On "The Nurse's Tale," a lyric ("I once had a boy, or should I say that he had me") nods to The Beatles. Slow and slightly creepy arpeggiations unite the songs. "Crys" is a lovely and sad song draped to a long and gracefully unfurling melody that almost has the quality of chant, with distended shoe-gaze guitars squished in the background: "Cry for all the newsmakers/ cry for all the naysayers/ but cry for the moon and the stars/ for you are what you/ cry for salvation." Vaguely retro organ sounds add a plush carpet underneath. Fans of Stereolab and the Dutch psych-revivalist Jacco Gardner will appreciate Holy Wave's music. There are points at which the careful, trebly stereo-chorus guitar brings to mind The Smiths. A relaxed ascending and descending serves as a gentle structural arc throughout the album, giving Holy Wave a subtle baroque touch. *John Adamian*

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Sometimes Just the Sky

LAMBENT LIGHT/THIRTY TIGERS

Sometimes Just the Sky is a different sort of best-of compilation. To celebrate her 30th anniversary as a recording artist, **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, producer **Ethan Johns** and a handful of his handpicked musicians decamped to Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in rural England and revisited one song from each of Carpenter's previous albums (except, for whatever reason, 2001's *Time* Sex* Love**). To that they added the newly written title track and set about not so much recreating the representative choices but resetting them to accommodate the seasoned voice and approach of the now-60-year-old singer. That voice is still a gutsy, alluring instrument. Since her debut, 1987's *Hometown Girl*, Carpenter has opened herself up without reservation, revealing through her stories soulfulness, intelligence, compassion and an innate empathy rare even among other high-profile confessional singer-songwriters. She hasn't always succeeded–some of those dozen albums have been less than memorable–but her more powerful performances leave a listener with much worth pondering long after an initial few listens. Much of the credit for the consistency that marks *Sometimes Just the Sky* goes to Johns, whose production and multiple instrumental contributions bring to the new renditions of these 13 songs–some of them deep cuts–a demonstrable intimacy. The retooled (some more so than others) versions of tunes like the earnest "This is Love," the nakedly personal "I Have a Need for Solitude" and the tender "Superman," as well as the fine sole contemporary track, accomplish the goal of inspiring a reflection of this dependably praiseworthy artist. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Wild Child

Expectations DUALTONE

Wild Child has been one of Austin, Texas's best kept secrets over the last several years but the word seems to be getting out with the band's fourth album, *Expectations*. The seven-piece had so many ideas this time around that they teamed up with a number of producers, most notably ex-Death Cab For Cutie guitarist **Chris Walla**. They also traveled to far off places like Norway and outside of Philadelphia to lay down tracks. The result is their most fully formed and polished album to date, with **Kelsey Wilson** taking charge–she's developed into a subtle yet powerful voice, reminiscent of Lake Street Dive's Rachael Price or Grace Potter. Throughout *Expectations*, whether she's singing about losing love on "Eggshells" or all out failing on "Sinking Ship," she oscillates from poignant restraint to all out fire. So that the group expanded their production and, in turn, expanded their sound–it suits them well and gives her a bigger platform to shine through. The subject matter *Expectations* explores can best be characterized as meditations on, well, the expectations we have of others. At times, it can come off as rather unsurprising, especially when you string the songs next to one another. But Wilson's a star in the making, and this band continues to show growth and promise. Now is a good time to get on board. *Mike Ayers*

Josh Urist

The Cold Equations: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack VEGGS

Fake movie soundtracks aren't an entirely new concept–it only takes a quick scan online to reveal loads of scores and collections created for films that never were. But few take the conceit so seriously or produce results as rewarding as composer **Josh Urist**'s "soundtrack" to *The Cold Equations*, a full-length album inspired by the 1954 science fiction short story by Tom Godwin. The songs were written as if to score a film adaptation, meaning they range from mellow background music for quiet scene transitions to squawking horn breakdowns you can only imagine bursting during some climactic chase action. Urist even had a real trailer shot for the fake movie. It's hard to believe, then, that *The Cold Equation*'s background isn't its most fascinating note. Nope–that'd go to the crack squad of musicians Urist assembled to make it. Bon Iver saxophonist **Colin Stetson**, Arcade Fire violinist **Sarah Neufeld**, Taylor Swift pianist **David Cook**, singer-songwriter **Jeff Plankenhorn** and more lend a hand. All that aside, Urist's compositions are lovely if not showstopping. Neufield plays a beautifully plaintive violin melody on "He Meant It the Way It Sounded," tumbling and twirling over some would-be windswept, planetary landscape scene. On "Woden Bound," Urist creates shuffling country-folk with an earthy, organic feel, and undulating future-funk sax marks the slippery blues of "You Told a Lie," which is the fake flick's closing credits ballad. *The Cold Equations* is better than it needed to be to make the concept work–and while the actual movie may never exist, it's certainly an apt soundtrack to your day. *Justin Jacobs*

Mind Over Mirrors

Bellowing Sun

PARADISE OF BACHELORS

Mind Over Mirrors began as a solo project of synthesist and composer **Jaime Fennelly** but, over the course of the band's discography, the group's lineup has expanded in relation to the scope of sounds featured on each album. Fennelly's latest, *Bellowing Sun*, finds the composer tapping into the creative well of his current city, Chicago. Freakwater/Eleventh Dream Day's **Janet Beveridge Bean** provides vocals, percussion and zither, Volcano Choir's **Jon Mueller** drums and sings, and **Jim Becker** of Califone plays fiddle, augmenting and contrasting Fennelly's swelling synth textures. The new record arrives in conjunction with a multimedia installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago featuring an ambitious light sculpture modeled after an enormous drum. It isn't an accidental symbol: Deep roots in Appalachian and biorhythmic thumps connect the sound as much to rocky coastlines and open plains as they do spiraling cosmic expanses. At their most visceral–such as the ragged "Matchstick Grip," which features Bean's vocals more upfront than ever before, and the spooky, fiddle drone "Vermillion Pink"–MoM tap into the chaos of wilderness, easing away the lines dividing "human" and "nature," reminding the listener that outer wilderness and inner wilderness are one in the same. On ecstatic compositions like "Halfway to the Zenith" and "Pause to Wonder," Fennelly and company offer the most resonant expressions of the group's ecological synth-folk yet, centered on inevitability and true recognition: "The thee/ and the thou/ pause to wonder." *Jason P. Woodbury*

PLUNDERING THE VAULTS

Allen Ginsberg

Howl and Other Poems CRAFT

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness/ starving hysterical naked/ dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking/ for an angry fix..." So begins one of the most famous and controversial poems ever written, **Allen Ginsberg**'s "Howl," first published in 1956. Why, you might wonder, is this magazine, whose focus is rock music, running a review of a poem, especially one from six decades ago? For one thing, its impact on a generation—particularly many of those who would put poetry to music in the following decade (see Zimmerman, Robert)—is incalculable. "Howl" was a seismic shock, transcending the confines of literature to become a cultural marker—its publication triggered a precedent-setting obscenity trial, the ramifications of which are still being felt today. Ginsberg was a counterculture hero until his death, and "Howl" was his crowning achievement. Reading it at one's own pace, in one's own inner voice, is one way to experience "Howl," but listening to Ginsberg read it, the ferocity and heat of his words, his near-monotonic New Jersey drone an odd juxtaposition to the teeming life described, is something else altogether. This new vinyl boxed set—the LP itself is red, as was the original—is built around the 1959 Fantasy Records release that featured Ginsberg reading "Howl" and, as advertised, other poems (including "Footnote to Howl," "America," "Kaddish" and other Ginsberg classics) in front of a rapt audience. It's housed in a beautiful package that is a keeper itself, including a paperback reproduction of City Lights Books' original *Howl and Other Poems*, a booklet containing essays and commentaries by **Anne Waldman**, **Dennis McNally**, **Ann Charters** and others, and even a glossy B&W photo of the young, pre-beard poet at his typewriter, setting into motion what we all now know as the Beat Generation. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Charles Mingus

Live at Montreux 1975 EAGLE

Not that there was a time when he wasn't, but **Charles Mingus**, the extraordinarily gifted jazz bassist and composer, was in a particularly forward-thinking phase when he brought his latest ensemble to the Swiss Montreux Jazz Festival in 1975. The music is not experimental in the sense that it had gone so far out as to become inaccessible, but it was more that he was open to ideas that might have seemed of little interest to him five or 10 years earlier. That sense of expanded focus is demonstrated right at the outset of this two-disc, 90-minute set with "Devil Blues," drawn—as are all three lengthy tracks on disc one—from Mingus' *Changes One* and *Changes Two* albums of 1974-75. The track is a gritty blues, written and sung coarsely here by the band's tenor saxophonist **George Adams** (words by blues great **Gatemouth Brown**), with pianist **Don Pullen** bringing to it a downhome vibe more fitting of a Texas roadhouse than a Northeast jazz festival. "Free Cell Block F, 'Tis Nazi USA" swings like mad, giving trumpeter **Jack Walrath** and the rhythm section (**Dannie Richmond** plays drums) plenty of room to open up, while the half-hour-plus "Sue's Changes" leaps giddily from steamy ensemble playing to the type of freeform expression guaranteed to drive non-jazz aficionados up a wall. For disc two, the band is joined by the great **Gerry Mulligan** on baritone sax and **Benny Bailey** on trumpet for a relatively sedate take on Mingus' signature composition "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" and the Billy Strayhorn standard "Take the 'A' Train." For those who prefer their jazz more straight-ahead, these two pieces will likely be the highlights, but seasoned Mingus acolytes will relish (despite the dicey sound quality) the first part of the set. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Fleetwood Mac

Fleetwood Mac: Deluxe Edition

WARNER BROS.

Fleetwood Mac already had one self-titled LP under their belts by 1975. But what else could they have titled the creative rebirth of their 10th studio album? Over seven years, they'd morphed from blues to psychedelia to mainstream rock, but new recruits **Lindsey Buckingham** and **Stevie Nicks** cemented their transition into a Billboard chart juggernaut—adding mystical poetry, folky fingerpicking, and ornate pop stylings to their arsenal. It's hard not to view *Fleetwood Mac*—better known among fans as "The White Album"—as the warm-up for *Rumours*, their record-breaking 1977 sequel. But that's like comparing the Great Pyramid of Giza to the Great Wall of China—they're both fairly miraculous. This deluxe remaster couldn't possibly improve on the original engineering and production, but fans will rightly devour this set for the treasure trove of bonus tracks, including a stash of previously unheard alternate takes and live cuts. It's bizarre hearing such classic songs in their blemished early form, without the lush overdubs from the finished takes. (On an especially raw "Monday Morning," Buckingham's vocal sounds completely unmixed, as he charmingly hums an approximation of his soon-to-be guitar solo.) There are diehard delights aplenty—from Nicks' random studio chatter ("Good one, band") and added "oohs" on "Rhiannon" to the erratic guitars of "World Turning." The live disc dates back to 1976, when the band was forced to dip into their back catalog: The most fascinating moments are cultural mash-ups, with Buckingham and Nicks reinterpreting the Peter Green era on smoldering versions of "Oh Well" and "The Green Manalishi (With the Two Pronged Crown)." Call it "The Whiter Album." *Ryan Reed*

Jerry Garcia

Before the Dead ROUND

One of the most surefire chuckles in Amir Bar-Lev's Grateful Dead documentary *Long Strange Trip* arrives early in the film, courtesy of **Barbara "Brigid" Meier, Jerry Garcia's** girlfriend of the pre-GD 1960s. Often described as the "love of his life," she bought the young musician his first guitar. He soon discovered bluegrass music and the five-string banjo playing of Earl Scruggs and began to practice day in and day out. Looking straight into the camera more than half a century later, explaining why she and her boyfriend drifted, Meier deadpans, "I found bluegrass really tiresome." Bad for Barbara, good for us. *Before the Dead*, at four CDs or five LPs, is the most comprehensive collection of acoustic-music recordings featuring Garcia during that formative folk and bluegrass period. Much of it has floated around before; some makes its debut here. The audio quality necessarily varies but, throughout, despite Meier's disclaimer, the music ranges from enjoyable to thrilling. Curated by former Dead publicist **Dennis McNally** and documentarian **Brian Miksis**, *Before the Dead* serves primarily as history—even the most obsessive Deadhead probably won't listen to it often, but all should hear it at least once. The chronologically arranged set begins in 1961, with the 18-year-old Garcia and good friend/future songwriting partner **Robert Hunter** reeling out eight tunes on guitars for Brigid's 16th birthday party. The repertoire—as remains so throughout the box—is nearly all from the traditional well, with songs like the spiritual "Oh, Mary Don't You Weep" and the Joan Baez arrangement of "Rake and a Rambling Boy." The guitar work is serviceable but not outstanding, and the vocals are ragged, but Bob and Jerry, as they're billed, are having a good ol' time. Garcia doesn't break out the banjo until the June 1962 recordings of the **Sleepy Hollow Hog Stompers**, one of several configurations featuring shifting personnel that occupy the package. America was deep into the "folk scare" by that time and Garcia already proves to be a master of the genre, his vocal delivery now recognizable from the first words of "Cannonball Blues," the A.P. Carter number with which the group starts its set. Fans who later latched on to Garcia's bluegrass pickin' with Old and In the Way will surely feel at home with these and the other 1962-63 recordings made with various short-lived assemblages. The kid had a way with strings for sure. By the spring of 1964, when the last tunes here were recorded, Garcia was already searching for something new. He'd soon enough figure out what it was. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Eric Andersen

The Essential Eric Andersen

REAL GONE/SONY LEGACY

Even when **Eric Andersen** first appeared on the scene in the mid-'60s as part of the folk boom, when he was his still in his early 20s, his songs felt like those of a man who'd lived a full life. Early compositions like "Thirsty Boots" and "Dusty Box Car Wall"—both of which are included on this 33-track anthology (the former in a live version)—were imbued with authenticity, a quality that has remained embedded in the singer-songwriter's work all these years. You don't hear much about him anymore, although he's still working, and *The Essential...* is the ideal opportunity to reassess, or discover for the first time, what contemporaries like Dylan, Danko and Baez saw in him. The set cherry-picks, in non-chronological order, material from 18 albums released on nearly as many labels, from Andersen's pure-folkie beginnings on the Vanguard label into his few '70s brushes with commercial success (the *Blue River* and *Be True to You* albums) and deeper into the catalog. Throughout, there's a richness to his delivery, whether Andersen is rendering a stark cover of Lou Reed's "You Can't Relive the Past," accompanied only by his own acoustic guitar, or more lushly arranged singer-songwriter fare from the '70s ("Florentine," "Is It Really Love at All" and the title track of *Blue River*, featuring **Joni Mitchell**). The seemingly random sequencing (the final song, "Plains of Nebrasky-O," is actually from his 1965 debut), rather than presenting a disjointed overview, puts Andersen's output into shuffle mode, affirming that there have been very few quality gaps regardless of the routes this underrated artist has taken. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Gene Clark

Gene Clark Sings for You OMNIVORE

There's reason to get excited about this record of long-lost and hard-to-find demo tunes from early in **Gene Clark**'s post-Byrds years. Clark wrote most of the songs featured on this collection during a period when he was between record deals, having been dropped by Columbia Records after going solo. In a 1985 interview, Clark, who died in 1991, said he had been in a prolific and poetic phase at the time, cranking out tunes,holing himself up at his home in Laurel Canyon, writing just to write and filling drawers with ideas. "I have no idea what I was thinking about–just images," he said. The rough and raw 14 demos gathered here, recorded in late 1967, were mostly just rumored about for years. Clark wrote these songs in hopes of landing a new contract or to hand off to other artists to record and earn himself royalties. Included in this set are demos that Clark made for the band the Rose Garden, which recorded the song "Till Today" on their solitary 1968 record. The songs split the difference nicely between the slightly more up-tempo and baroque psych-pop of Clark's solo debut with the Gosdin Brothers and where he was headed on his somber, folky 1971 record *White Light*. Many of these songs have a dark poetic cast, such as "Past My Door," which also has strings, unusual tempo changes and a march-like coda. Some are just Clark with his guitar. He gets minimal accompaniment elsewhere. The sparse guitar and piano backing gets stiff and a little blocky at times, capturing the demo vibe. For those who find some of Clark's work with the Byrds or his early solo records to be too polished and produced, these recordings offer a taste of something more scruffy, deepening the connection to artists like Moby Grape and Love. One of the most interesting songs on the collection, the country-ish "7:30 Mode," includes lines like, "Did you hear the wind's harmonic whine?" and "He left his strings to melt into no song." It also has a couple weird rhythmic hiccups, where the drummer seems to drop half a beat. But the songs and Clark's voice, with its grain and ache, pull one into these kaleidoscopic sketches, which range from imagistic Dylan-esque explorations to more traditional songs of romance, rambling and loneliness.

John Adamian

Chris Squire

Fish Out of Water (Remastered)

ESOTERIC RECORDINGS

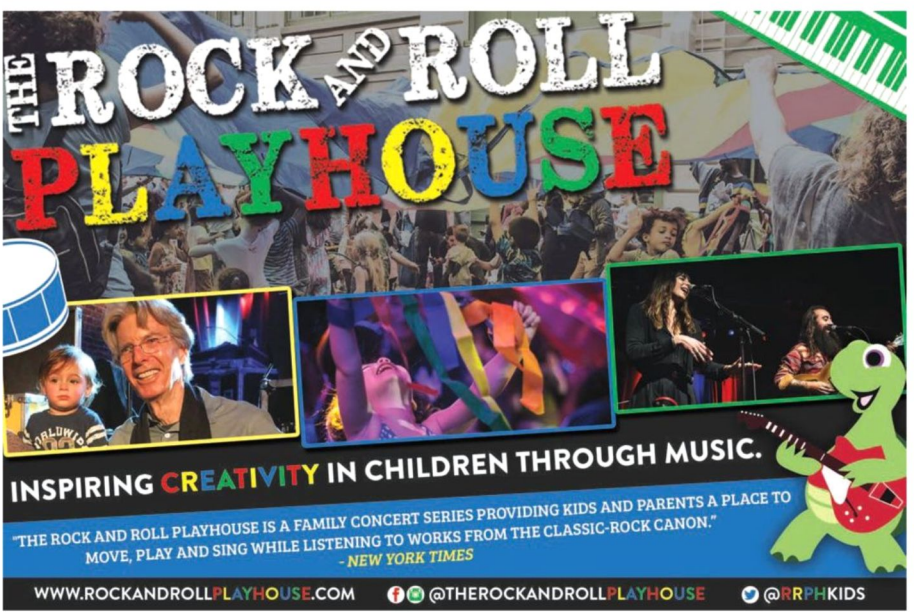
Late Yes bassist **Chris Squire** only recorded one true solo LP, having funneled most ideas through his juggernaut prog-rock band for almost five decades. He never needed to bother with a follow-up, and it's hard to imagine that he would have topped 1975's *Fish Out of Water*. Squire worked on these five symphonic-sized songs during a period of deliberate respite. Following Yes' 1974 LP, *Relayer*, the five members (Squire, singer Jon Anderson, guitarist Steve Howe, drummer Alan White, keyboardist Patrick Moraz) carved out time to pursue their respective solo projects. Five albums emerged, but only *Fish Out of Water*–titled after the bassist's aquatic nickname–matched the quality of a proper Yes album. Personnel-wise, it's almost a lost Yes LP anyway, given Moraz's angelic synthesizer runs on the 11-minute epic "Silently Falling" and the limber, jazzy drumming of the band's former drummer, **Bill Bruford**, throughout. But Squire cleverly separated himself from the pack with his orchestral vision, utilizing grandiose string and brass arrangements from **Andrew Pryce Jackman**, his former collaborator in formative act The Syn. The results feel like Yes on a visceral level, given Squire's distinctive Rickenbacker fuzz tone and gift with radiant vocal harmony. But they also stand apart: It's easy to imagine the band (who were in full-blown jazz-fusion mode on *Relayer*) vetoing the soft-rock sweetness of "You by My Side" or the fidgety art-pop groove of "Hold Out Your Hand." *Fish Out of Water* is more than a Yes souvenir–it's one of the essential orchestral-rock unions. *Ryan Reed*

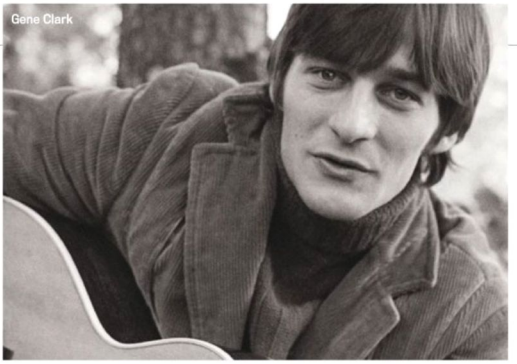
Various Artists

Stax Singles, Vol. 4: Rarities & The Best of the Rest

CRAFT

This six-CD collection, as noted in its title, is the fourth in a series that's documented the output of one of the most important soul music labels of all time. Over the first three volumes, every hit produced by Stax's core artists in the '60s and '70s–**Otis Redding**, **Sam & Dave**, **Carla** and **Rufus Thomas**, **Booker T. and the MG's** and **Isaac Hayes**–was presented anew in context, along




Gene Clark

with dozens of other less familiar, but equally potent tracks. The new collection delves further, reexamining the B-sides of those singles as well as the Memphis label's forays into music only tangentially connected to soul. Some of it will surprise casual denizens of the label who've never ventured this far: On the rock-centric disc five, power-pop heroes **Big Star**'s "September Gurls" follow a driving take on Johnny Cash's "I Walk the Line" by a forgotten band called **The Hot Dogs** (which, like Big Star, recorded for the Stax-distributed Ardent Records), and there are stomping tunes by future Derek and the Dominos member **Bobby Whitlock** ("And I Love You") and onetime Sun Records rockabilly **Billy Lee Riley**. Gospel is acknowledged throughout the final disc, which features rousing tracks from **The Jubilee Hummingbirds**, **The Dixie Nightingales** and others. But mostly, it's those elusive R&B discoveries that never came close to the charts that make this package (which includes an 80-page, annotated book) one of the most valuable of the series. **The Soul Children** placed 11 Stax singles on the *Billboard* R&B chart between 1968–74: "Poem on the School House Door" wasn't one of them, but the powerful ballad should've been. Spend some time and you'll undoubtedly find many more.

Jeff Tamarkin

Camarao

The Imaginary Soundtrack to a Brazilian Western Movie 1964-1974

ANALOG AFRICA

Accordion music isn't always the easiest sell. The mention of the instrument causes knee-jerk nose-wrinkling. Brazilian forro is accordion-centric. There are squeezeboxes going at it, and often not a ton more. Well, that's not entirely true, because the metallic percussion of the triangle drives the music along with the booming of sordu-style bass drums, played with a mallet in one hand and muted with the other, to get a variety of tones. The hand percussionists together create some deep and layered funky-drummer rhythms. This music was designed, or came into full flower, as the dance soundtrack to boozy parties in Recife, fueled by the drinking of Brazilian cachaca (sugar cane liquor). **Reginaldo Alves Ferreira** was a musician known as Camarao, or "the Shrimp," or, more fully, as **Mestre Camarao**, "Master Shrimp." One way to listen to Camarao's energetic forro is to imagine the accordion parts transposed to other instruments, say, a guitar, a horn section, or a piano or organ. It helps in terms of appreciating the rhythmic complexity, the melodic invention and the coiled kinetic power of the music. It might seem odd to suggest, but there's some metabolic connection to all kinds of other genres more familiar to American ears–funk, rock, prog, punk, reggae and soul. This isn't the urban sambas of Rio, but Camarao fused that energy into his bands. Horns and strings do show up on this collection, particularly in boisterously syncopated tuba bass lines and cartoon-manic squiggles from a brass section. All but one of the 16 tracks on this mostly instrumental collection are under three minutes long. Camarao, who died in 2015, was a musical hero of the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. He was a champion of music from the northeastern part of Brazil, but he turned forro into a national and even global style. If you only have room for one album of accordion music in your heart and collection, this might be the one.

John Adamian

Bill Evans Trio

On a Monday Evening

FANTASY RECORDS/ CONCORD BICYCLE MUSIC

Relaxed, if quite often intense and exploratory, the previously unreleased *On a Monday Evening* captures pianist **Bill Evans** in a peak performance leading his trio circa the mid-'70s, with virtuoso bassist **Eddie Gomez** and drummer **Eliot Zigmund**. The show, at a packed 1,000-seat Wisconsin Union Theater on the UW-Madison campus, survives thanks to some serendipity–two college-age jazz DJs had interviewed Evans, and decided to document the concert using their radio station's equipment. The recording, remastered from the original analog tapes, sounds all but pristine. Fusion was the fast-growing flavor of the day, but Evans continued to ply his elevated trade in a strictly acoustic format. As per his usual approach, he mixes original compositions with standards, starting with his own spritely "Sugar Plum," which begins with two minutes of unaccompanied piano before opening up for a leapfrogging solo by Gomez. The leader's "Time Remembered" is a nostalgia-laced mid-tempo piece, capped with Gomez's arco improvisations. And the pianist's aptly titled "T.T.T. (Twelve Tone Tune)" is more adventurous, with the three musicians dropping in and out of various sections in a kind of extended call-and-response. The set offers several familiar crowd-pleasers, including a freewheeling, time-tugging workout on Disney film waltz "Someday My Prince Will Come," featuring some of the album's most provocative soloing; a hard-swinging version of Cole Porter's "All of You"; and the somber, way laidback closer "Some Other Time." Two other tunes, Jerome Kern's beautifully melodic "Up With the Lark" and the wistful, Brazilian-flavored "Minha (All Mine)" were relatively new to Evans' repertoire. *On a Monday Evening* is a welcome and unexpected gem that illuminates the in-concert prowess of the Evans/Gomez/Zigmund lineup.

Philip Booth

Jethro Tull

Heavy Horses: New Shoes Edition

PARLOPHONE

Jethro Tull's 11th LP is rarely cited with the same esteem as its predecessor, 1977's *Songs From the Wood*–and that sort of makes sense. *Wood* marked the first installment of an invigorated folk-rock trilogy, so fans and critics weren't as surprised by the band's next annual outing. But on a song-by-song basis, *Heavy Horses* is every bit its equal, blending **Ian Anderson**'s fanciful acoustic storytelling with his band's dense progressive-rock attack. Modern prog wizard **Steven Wilson**–who appears to be remastering the Tull catalog piece-by-piece–brings his usual sensitivity to the arrangements, highlighting the thrust of **John Glascock**'s juicy bass on "One Brown Mouse" and "Acres Wild," **Martin Barre**'s harmonized guitar leads on "Journeyman" and **Barrie Barlow**'s spastic drum fills on the legendary intro of "No Lullaby." Just like the previous Jethro Tull reissue sets, the bonus tracks alone are worth the price of admission: The flute-fluttering "Living in These Hard Times" (both the dynamic original and its gentler, previously unheard version) boasts one of Anderson's strongest vocal hooks; the studio version of "Quatrain" (which appeared in live form on 1978's *Bursting Out*) veers between mandolin-led passages and full-blown hard-rock; an early version of acoustic ballad "Jack-a-Lynn" comes to life without the jarring electric keys of the later *Broadsword and the Beast* B-side; and "Horse-Hoeing Husbandry" is like a greatest hits of late-'70s Tull in one package, full of martial rhythms, grandiose chord changes and traditional folk melodies. *Heavy Horses* is the last essential Jethro Tull album–and, as this reissue proves, one of their *most* essential.

Ryan Reed

Comus

First Utterance (Remastered and Expanded Edition)

ESOTERIC

First Utterance, the debut album from haunted and haunting prog-folk band **Comus**, ticks all the boxes of a lost classic: an inimitable style, acclaim from famous musicians and collectors (including Opeth mastermind **Åkerfeldt**) and a holy-grail price for an original LP. The only issue: It's become so famous as having "lost classic" status that it's not really lost anymore. Esoteric's new reissue sheds even more light on this British sextet's prehistoric freak-folk approach–a witch's brew of lush acoustic guitars, dissonant violin, pastoral flute, eerily pitched vocals, and lyrics about disturbing subjects like rape, hangings, murder and life in a mental institution. Almost five decades after its 1971 release, *First Utterance* remains bone-chilling: "Diana" is like a traditional folk tune turned on its head with glissando guitar fills, pounding congas and cacophonous harmonies; the 11-minute epic "Drip Drip" (the lyrics of which later inspired the title of Opeth's *My Arms, Your Hearse*) spices up its noise-folk arrangement with random funk bass and what sounds like ping-pong balls being thwacked against the microphones. They played with the intensity of a rock band, the delicacy of a folk act and the untamed experimentation of avant-garde performance artists. Who were these people? Comus went on to release one more LP in 1974, the more conventionally rock and overall less-freaky *To Keep From Crying*, before vanishing into obscurity (and reuniting onstage decades later). But thanks to the craftiness of prog hunters, their hellish weirdness will live on, straddling that borderline of fame and infamy.

Ryan Reed

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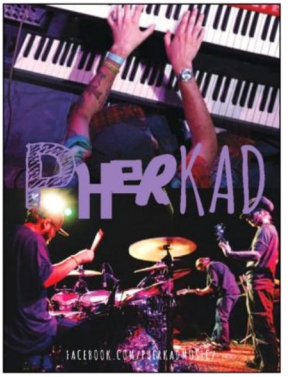
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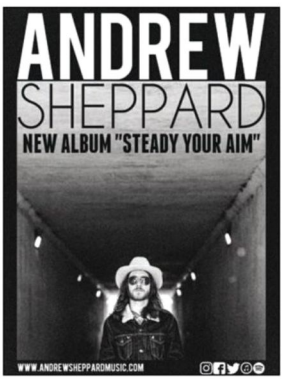
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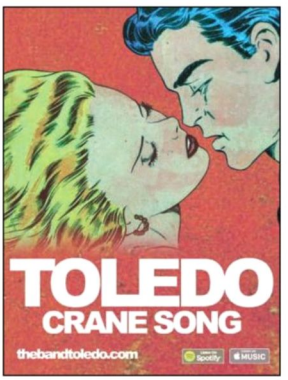
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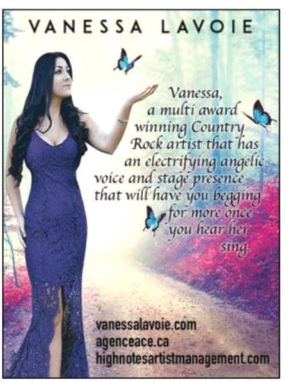
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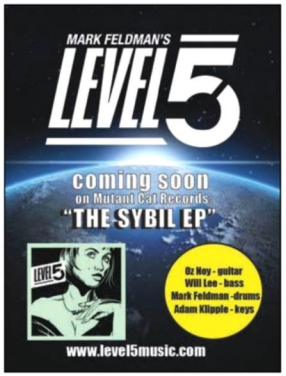

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songs. He would constantly be surprised which songs I picked, but they always just came out really cool. That's why we have had such an incredible, nutty, diversity of songs over the last 40 years. But it's just as simple as me picking something I like and him picking something he likes.

KING EARL

Ed wrote the first version of this song years ago. Then, when I was doing some stuff as the Malone Brothers, I brought Ed's demo to my brother Tommy, and we took parts of it and rewrote it. "King Earl" is about the New Orleans guitar player, songwriter and singer Earl King. The Rads were Earl King's backup band for a while. But, after Tommy and I rearranged it, I rearranged it another time and added some more pieces, and it became this.

BRING ME THE HEAD OF ISAAC NEWTON

I'm looking at the CD and I just realized they spelled Isaac wrong. It's supposed to be two "As" not two "Ss." What a weird song; I love it.

RUN RED RUN

Ed wrote this song a long time ago and it's dear to his heart because it has something to do with his grandmother, whose nickname, I believe, was Red. Ed always loved it, but we didn't play it that much because the guys didn't like playing it. They thought it was OK, but a little too repetitive. So, I said to Ed: "You love this song; I like this song. Let's do something to it so we'll all love it." And we toughened it up and made sections where less is going on. It came out really cool. So, I'm finally satisfied with that goddamn song. [*Laughs.*]

MAKE YOU SAY HOT DOG

Every year, The Rads would play during Mardi Gras for this crazy party called the MOMs Ball—MOM stands for: Mystic Orphans and Misfits. This is an organization that came from The Rads' regular Wednesday night gig in the early days, which was at a pizza joint called Luigi's. That's where our fan base started. Then we moved over to a place on Frenchmen Street called the Dream Palace, which became this crazy thing in everyone's lives. Every night, everyone got a little—let's just go with "loose."

At the MOMs Ball, if you didn't have a costume that the door people—the costume police, let's call them—deemed you had put some thought and effort and creativity into, then you weren't getting in, even if you had a ticket. If someone just stuck a rubber mask on and tried to walk in, they'd say, "No!" They took that very seriously and so did we. People like Dan Aykroyd even got turned away. It was the best party of the year that no one remembered. Every year, the MOMs Ball would have a theme and Ed would write a song for the theme. "Make You Say Hot Dog" was just one of those, "Let's have fun and have a party" songs because it's real chanty and stupid. We love it for that reason.

16 MONKEYS ON A SEESAW

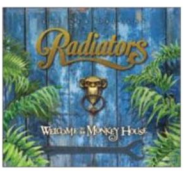
I wrote this song as a left-field political commentary on the way that people act: Eight monkeys on one side of the seesaw, eight monkeys on the other. I brought that to Raw Oyster Cult first, and then brought it to The Radiators, and it ended up on the album with this monkey theme.

I GOT A BUZZ ON

This is one of those jokey Ed Volker songs that we could hardly get through without laughing because it repeats "Buzz on" quite a lot and people just love that. It's really sing-songy in a sort of psycho way.

NIGHTBIRD

"Nightbird" is one of Ed's melancholic, ballady things. He was on the fence about it, and I said, "No, we are doing it." I think it came out great.



FISHHEAD MAN

This song is along the same lines as "Welcome to the Monkey House"—they're similar in attitude more than anything else. We're all part of this big Fishhead family because we originally started calling our music "Fish Head music" a million years ago, partly because someone just came up with the name. Ed wrote a music column in an old New Orleans music rag and his pen name was Zeke Fishhead when he was writing these musical articles, or articles having to do with philosophical crap with a musical bent. So, we started calling anything we did Fish Head music, long before the band Phish, so our fans started calling themselves Fishheads.

THE FOUNTAINS OF NEPTUNE

"The Fountains of Neptune" is one of those songs where you hear it and go, "Where the hell did that come from?" But, I figured out, decades ago, not to even bother asking that question of Ed Volker. [*Laughs.*]

ONE MONKEY

"One Monkey" sounds like some old New Orleans R&B number, as does "I Got a Buzz On" or "Hot Dog," for that matter. We were all very inspired and affected by old New Orleans R&B players like Ernie K-Doe, Jessie Hill, Lee Dorsey and Earl King. In fact, when we first started going on the road, we would play those guys' songs and people would ask if those were our songs. We'd think, "What are you talkin' about? This was a big hit!" But, as it turns out, they were big hits in New Orleans, but not necessarily anywhere else, except for "Mother-in-Law" by Ernie K-Doe, "Working in the Coal Mine" by Lee Dorsey or "Come On" by Earl King. We used to do a version of "Turn on Your Love Light"—the most well known recording is by a Texas blues singer named Bobby "Blue" Bland. That song was written by Deadric Malone. So when people saw the credits, they would see D. Malone and they thought I wrote it. I wasn't even *born* when that song was written, but I always got a kick out of that, so I never corrected them.

RIDE RIDE SHE CRIED

"Ride Ride She Cried" is an interesting song and I loved singing it with Ed. I didn't ever ask what that weird hook part, "Ooh bomma lady" meant, and I don't care. In the '60s, there were songs like this where I didn't care what they meant. Sometimes the sound of a word works best in a section of a song, more so than the meaning of the word because there's a percussiveness to a word that can enhance a song even more so than what the word means. That sounds kind of general, but it's really true. And you can hear that with the refrain in the chorus part of "Ride Ride She Cried."

DOUBLED UP IN A KNOT

"Doubled Up in a Knot" is a song that we had been playing since the mid-'80s as a short intro song to one of our kind-of hits on Epic Records, "Love Is a Tangle." We expanded it—and it's still only two minutes and 40 seconds—but Ed wanted to have that recorded in a studio. So, if he really wanted it, I said, "Sure, let's do it."

FIRST SNOW

"First Snow" is a very slow, melancholy song about snow. Back in the day, when Ed was a little kid in New Orleans, it was rarer than hen's teeth. It seems to be happening more often now, but we won't go into ol' global warming. [*Laughs.*] Along with the imagery from his lyrics, it's got a nice lope to it. Ed's got a calliope sound on his keyboard, and it's just him singing and us playing. I don't do any background or harmony vocals. We were having so much fun playing the groove. It's very slow and laid-back with a lot of places for a person to show that they understand that it's better sometimes not to play.

mark on *Rare Birds*' groovier tendencies. Along with the Black Crowes singer, Wilson recorded a still-on-ice session with Phil Lesh for a potential TV project and, a few years later, he crossed paths with Bob Weir at a TRI Studios Garcia tribute. Weir ended up offering Wilson a spot in RatDog and, though they only ended up playing a handful of dates together due to other commitments, the experience was still a "lightbulb moment."

"I learned a lot tricks from Bobby, how he projects his vocals and stuff," says Wilson, who has since proven his improv chops onstage with Joe Russo's Almost Dead. "Playing with those guys gave me the confidence to solo and just [informed] my melodic sensibilities. Moving to song is extremely powerful. That's something that you see with such great triumph with the Grateful Dead. I would think about that a lot when I would go to Furthur shows—how the crowd was grooving. There is a subconscious goal to make a crowd move. That's just something you don't see in 'indie' bands and those crowds."

* * *

A FEW YEARS AGO, WILSON RECEIVED A call from his good friend Nigel Godrich—perhaps best known as Radiohead's longtime producer—asking if he wanted to come to Ocean Way Recording and play guitar on what would become Roger Waters' first solo rock sessions in years, *Is This the Life We Really Want?*

"On their second day working on the album, Roger and Nigel decided they needed some guitar and I got the call and was like, 'Yes, that sounds fun,'" Wilson says with a laugh. "The weird thing is I'm not a [David] Gilmour scholar, but I've sensed similar sensibilities in our lyrical guitar soloing, both consciously and not through the years. There was this predestined feeling when I fit in with Roger; the song we did that day is untouched on the album."

Wilson not only ended up bringing the Pink Floyd co-founder over to his home studio, but he's also spent over a year touring arenas around the world with Waters' solo band, serving as his guitar counterpart. The gig had a direct impact on his solo work, too: Wilson now has a vocal coach and considers his playing more consistent across the board. And Waters hasn't been scared to give him some honest feedback either.

"He's taught me to cherish and to honor your rock-and-roll sensibility and not to let that fly off," Wilson says. "I was sitting at the piano with him, playing this song 'Me,' and I was concerned that the chord sequence was too long and meandering. His response was, 'No, double it.' He likes the fact that it's scary or uncomfortable."

Wilson also tweaked his live show leading up to *Rare Birds*, adding in song-specific visual projections inspired by his time with Waters. His current live band is something of an all-star outfit as well, featuring Jenny Lewis drummer Josh Adams, Norah Jones guitarist Jason Roberts, Waters keyboardist Drew Erickson and Circles Around the Sun/Grateful Shred bassist Dan Horne, who is near the center of a new West Coast scene fueled by a revived interest in the Grateful Dead. Their aim is to capture the treadmill energy of Wilson's new LP, squeezing more songs into their set, expanding their sound for bigger venues and leaving room for some choice jamming.

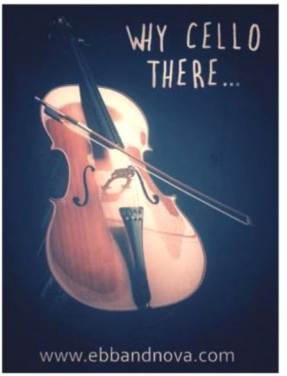
The guitarist is proud of his rock lineage yet, especially with *Rare Birds*, he's determined to prove his wide-spanning interests. "I haven't listened to classic-rock or popular folk-rock in quite some time," he says, without losing the reverence for those styles in his voice. "Those were my earlier days, when we were all discovering The Byrds for the first time. Now, the bands that I keep coming back to on iTunes are Talk Talk and Arthur Russell. I just started from a basic thing, building into my static trance and something you can dance to."

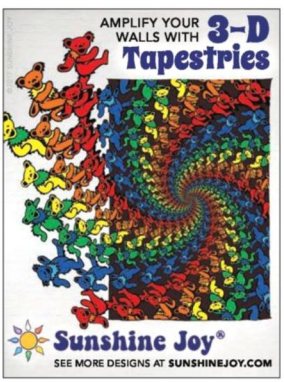
He's also acutely aware that by helping shift the indie world's focus back toward Los Angeles, he's partly responsible for the city's current musical gold rush.

"I feel like the entire fucking East Coast is here now," he says. "The whole town has expanded east. This is the town where you can actually fucking have a band and you can spread out and rehearse. It's exploding with venues and stuff, which is great because there was definitely a dark period."

Wilson's current "master plan" is to move out of LA to Joshua Tree and build a new studio—somewhere he can escape to write and record with some much needed "space and silence"—and come back with a batch of new songs at the end of 2019. He points to the drum-machine-driven *Rare Birds* tune "Miriam Montague," where he notes that "the bridge stands still," and the '80s-approved, Peter Gabriel-like trip out "Hard to Get Over" as examples of how he's been able to use the studio to push himself past his own sonic expectations.

"There's a moment in that song where it cuts to just the organ and time stands still," he says with a grin, still clearly enjoying the fact that he has his own sonic laboratory. "I'm just trying to find these clusters and explore. One of my greatest gifts, musically, is that I have no clue what the fuck I'm doing. I'm just completely and genuinely exploring."





know what incident I was referring to, but I'm definitely not writing about "this happened to me," in that Taylor Swift kind of way—where it's like this is about my boyfriend so hear me out. I also don't really feel too much catharsis, in that sense. That's one type of artist, one type of fantasy, where the artist paints a painting about something that happened in their lifetime. But there's a lot of ground out there to write about characters that aren't you and characters that don't exist.

I've even gone back and changed pronouns in a song and turned *she's* to *he's* and *he's* to *she's* just because I don't want to deal with the aftermath of people thinking that it's about something in particular. That's a shame because you shouldn't have to do that. But, then again, when The White Stripes covered Dolly Parton's "Jolene," I didn't change the pronouns because I was trying to prove a point that we weren't being ironic by singing this song; we weren't trying to be funny and the song was important. It was trying to get to a deeper part of our own band by playing this song as heavy as possible.

Do you remember the first song you ever wrote? What was your intention?
When I was a kid, all I cared about was the drums. There were guitars at my house that my brothers had and I had written this little bluesy thing. I thought that it was me imitating some blues song that was already out there, or that I had heard somewhere but now, when I look back I'm like, "No, that was the first song I wrote." I didn't write lyrics for it, and I actually constructed it in a 1-4-5 sort of blues progression, which was funny. I taught myself how to play, and I didn't know anything and I didn't really care. But nowadays, if my son did that, I would have been like, "Whoa! What was that you just played?!" That didn't happen around me; there's so much stuff going on when you're part of a big family. You don't even notice that somebody right next to you is building a thermonuclear device.

I was forced into playing guitar by proxy. I didn't have a band where we were a group of teenagers and we would all get together. So when I got a four-track in my room and I just wanted to play drums, I would record a guitar part just so I could play along to Fugazi or "Smells Like Teen Spirit," Bob Dylan, old folk songs or something I wrote myself. At the upholstery shop that I worked at, Brian Muldoon, the guy that I was apprenticing for, played drums just like me. In order for us to play together, I said, "I guess I'll play guitar." Up until The White Stripes, I considered myself a drummer and only played guitar because I didn't have a band to play drums for. That's when I realized I'd been writing songs and that I could reach people a lot easier with that instrument than with the drums.

You mentioned Captain Beefheart. Third Man Records is rereleasing *Trout Mask Replica* at the same time that your new album is coming out. Did some of that spirit animate *Boarding House Reach*, which is similarly wide-ranging?
There's definitely some amazing timing going on there, which is pretty hilarious. Just when we announced the record, Ben Blackwell at Third Man said he had talked to the Zappa family and worked out a deal for *Trout Mask Replica*. It's one of the greatest records ever made. It's like we're putting out The Beatles' "The White Album" or Benny Goodman's *Live at Carnegie Hall*. So when we did this vault package with my new record, it was funny that the next time we were gonna make an announcement was on April Fool's Day, which was also Easter Sunday, and the day that Beefheart and the Magic Band went down to the studio to listen to that record for the first time. I was like, "Oh, my god, that is just cosmically perfect; this is crazy." It just coincidentally worked like that.

As far as *Trout Mask Replica*, I came to that from this band I was in, The Go. John Krautner was the other guitar player in the band and he was big Zappa fan and, by process, I became a big Beefheart fan. He told me about Beefheart and I always thought that name just sounded like some goofball. I never paid it any mind, never heard any of his music. But he brought that John Peel Beefheart documentary [*The Artist Formerly Known as Captain Beefheart*] over to my house on VHS tape and I just lost it, man. I couldn't believe what I'd been missing for years. I was 23-24 by then and that just opened up a whole new realm. "Moonlight on Vermont" and "Ella Guru"—I just couldn't believe the process, the way that album was made, the conditions it was made under. That's some methodology—it is just absolutely incredible. It definitely borders on abuse, really. And that gets into a whole realm of Phil Spector's firing-a-gun way of working or James Brown fining musicians $50 for missing a note. It's definitely pleasing to read about that and wonder what it would have been like to be a musician working on a project like that along with people like James Brown or Beefheart. But it gets into a kind of realm where I've never gone, so far. [*Laughs.*]

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Area bands like Moby Grape, Mad River, The New Tweedy Bros and the Airplane. And I realized that the Airplane or the Grateful Dead were underdogs—they just happened to get popular. I found some friends who were into them, and my wife always liked them—her favorite song is "The Golden Road." Also, my new drummer Jake Morris grew up in Rochester and is younger than me. He didn't have punk-rock—Phish is his punk-rock.

Phish introduced a new legion of fans to your music when they covered "Gold Soundz" in 1999 and they have worked with longtime Pavement producer Bryce Goggin.
Jake's gotten us into Phish. I've seen Trey play solo in Florida at this Bonnaroo-type offshooot [Langerado 2007] and I liked it. Evidently, it was during his burned-out phase, but I thought it was really good. He sounded like a wounded Eric Clapton; kinda mean sounding, kinda cold. I liked it more than I like Phish. I wanna go see them—I was looking forward to going to Madison Square Garden when they were doing their bread run [the 2017 Baker's Dozen run], but I couldn't make it, unfortunately.

The indie and jam scenes have fused during the past 10 years, especially with the rise of festivals and the increased prominence of pop and hip-hop.
I also recently saw The Travelin' McCourys, they're sick. It was interesting to see them play. They weren't with their dad, Del, and it was interesting to see them temper their set toward some little jammy things. They're fantastic musicians and totally cool dudes. I got to meet them and took a picture with them. I have an appreciation for that kind of playing, obviously. They had seats for the old bluegrass people in the back, but it's interesting to me that the bluegrass world has become the jamband world.

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schedule topped the staggering 175-show mark.) His later years haven't been without their controversies either—from legal scuffles to the 2012 tour's acrimonious end to conflicting thoughts on the current band's nostalgic setlists.

"I'm not the type of person to do all the songs from our new album and forget all our hits when we do a show," Love says. "I love our classic songs. I love the way they sound on the records as well our live performances of them and how much energy and good vibrations they generate with people. There's nothing wrong with what we're known for. We're focused on recreating the songs as authentically as possible."

Late last year, Love did step outside The Beach Boys for his first solo album since 1981—*Unleash the Love*, a double-disc LP that mixes Love originals and reworked versions of "Beach Men" catalog material. The members of the current Beach Boys touring ensemble appear throughout the set; Love's children, *Full House* star John Stamos, Sugar Ray singer Mark McGrath and producer Paul Fauerso (a veteran of the 1970s Beach Boys side-project Celebration) also lent a hand.

"Before he became an actor, he was a drummer in a little three-piece band in Orange County," Love says of Stamos, who he credits with being one of the group's greatest apostles. "He would drive by my parents' house on his bicycle and look at the gold albums on the wall through the window because he lived nearby."

Unleash the Love's late-2017 release also coincided with the 50th anniversary of Love's life-changing December 1967 meeting with Transcendental Meditation guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Tracks like "Only One Earth," "Ram Raj," "Make Love Not War" and "The Earth Could Use an Evolutionary Advance" are loaded with nods to the ancient scriptures and spiritual teachings he's learned through his years of TM.

"I'd never felt so relaxed in my life, once he gave me the technique," Love says while reflecting on the equally transformative 1968 trip he took to India to visit the Maharishi with The Beatles, Prudence Farrow and others that produced "Dear Prudence."

"I heard Maharishi say, 'You need a cool head and a warm heart.' It's so simple, but so profound and true. Life on planet earth can be so stressful; it's absolutely horrible for millions of people. Transcendental Meditation gives you the tools to be able to not only cope with the issues and problems everyone faces, but to also perhaps exceed and excel."

Love has practiced TM regularly since then and credits it with keeping him balanced throughout the ensuing decades; he has regretted his public decisions on the rare days he's skipped TM during the past half-century.

"When you practice TM, your metabolism goes down to a level of rest twice as deep as deep sleep. It's profoundly relaxing, profoundly restful and it gives you the energy, clarity and ability to go into life and not have it grip and destroy you with all the tension and negativity that can overwhelm people. Your biochemistry—your brain chemistry—actually changes when you do a creative meditation, and the deep relaxation allows your mind to become clear so you can experience a bit more of an expanded awareness. There are three major states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and deep sleep. But this touches on a fourth state of consciousness, which Maharishi called Transcendental Consciousness. It gives you so much energy, clarity and creativity, and it gives you the energy to be able to do things that you might not have been able to do otherwise."

Instead of launching a solo tour in support of *Unleash the Love*, Love has started to weave a few of the LP's cuts into his Beach Boys setlists. "I've been the lead singer since we began with the song 'Surfin'" in 1961 and I wrote 'Surfin' Safari' with my cousin Brian," he says. "And then I wrote 'Surfin' U.S.A.' but was not credited. I don't see any reason to not travel with The Beach Boys."

He's also tweaked The Beach Boys live band in recent years, bringing in Brian Wilson's longtime musical director Jeffrey Foskett—who clocked in time with The Beach Boys in the '80s—to handle "the low parts and high parts on the original recordings done by cousin Brian that he no longer does." Stamos continues to sit in with the group frequently, too.

In terms of his own endurance on the road, Love chalks it up to both nature and nurture. His family is full of athletes—his brother Stan played in the NBA and his nephew Kevin is a power forward/center for the Cleveland Cavaliers, while Love himself is a long distance runner. And that displine clearly impacts his own music. "The combination of music and the athletics in the Love family gene pool have contributed to my longevity and musicality," he says. "My father was an athlete, but I grew up in a home with a grand piano, organ and harp so my mom also set the stage for what was to come. She even hosted parties for my uncle Murray—who was Brian, Dennis and Carl's father—to help expose his music."

In between dates with The Beach Boys, Love mentions that he would like to participate in some "intellectual, spiritual experiences" in lecture halls or colleges—he quips that he is, after all, the author of "Be True to Your School"—and continues to casually lay down tracks at his home studio in Lake Tahoe. The chapel-like space houses an old recording console that once belonged to the Grand Ole Opry. Yet, the band remains his primary focus.

"The Beach Boys is such an iconic thing—we have people who are 8-80 at our shows," he says. "I'm lucky that my family tradition became a profession."

DICKEY BETTS

By DEAN BUDNICK

FOR A LONG WHILE it appeared that Dickey Betts had delivered his final public performance on Nov. 1, 2014, during a charity event at Robarts Arena in Sarasota, Fla. Betts seemed to confirm this in a November interview, then changed course (as is his wont) on Dec. 12, his 74th birthday, with the announcement that he would indeed return to the road for a series of dates in 2018. His manager, David Spero, characterized Betts' surprise decision as "a present to himself."

Betts told his local newspaper, the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*: "Everywhere I go, fans keep saying they want me to get out and play again. I think the time is right." He decided to take things "back where it all begins" by opening his first run of shows at the Macon City Auditorium in Macon, Ga., where the Allman Brothers settled down together in 1970.

After acrimoniously parting ways with the band in 2000, Betts formed a new solo outfit and even returned to the studio for the first time in years. He eventually brought in another ABB alum, "Dangerous" Dan Toler, for a few years and revived his '70s solo band moniker Great Southern. Though the Brothers continued to play Betts' music, especially his instrumentals, Great Southern became the most reliable place to hear his vocal songs, including some of the group's biggest hits.

The new version of the Dickey Betts Band also features his son Duane on guitar, along with three other longtime members of Great Southern: Frankie Lombardi (drums), Mike Kach (keyboards and vocals) and Pedro Arevalo (bass). Betts has completed the collective with second drummer Steve Camilleri and a third guitar player, Damon Fowler. (Duane Betts, who has toured with his father and had a stint on the road with Dawes, will open the Macon gig and many of the dates to follow as a featured player with the Devon Allman Project.) The tour will kick off almost exactly a year after Gregg Allman's passing; the ABB co-founders reconnected shortly before the singer's death and Betts stepped back into the spotlight for the first time in a while to attend his funeral.

Matt Houston/Herald Tribune Archive

As for the group's repertoire, Betts suggests that, along with his songwriting staples, which include classics like "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," "Blue Sky," "Southbound," "Ramblin' Man," "Jessica," "High Falls" and "Back Where It All Begins," he will also dip into the late Gregg Allman's catalog. Beyond the initial round of announced gigs, Betts promises "a few more" are in the mix as well.

Was there a specific moment that made you decide it was time to return to the stage?
It just kind of happened. I do miss playing and hanging with my band, and now I have an opportunity to add in a few of Gregg's songs, as well. I'm looking forward to it.

Was there a particular song that you especially missed playing?
All of them, and some I haven't played in a while.

Have you been writing songs over the past few years and have you been tempted to record again?
No, the business has changed so much. I wasn't interested. We may do a live album of this tour.

You've performed with your son Duane for many years. Can you talk about his development on guitar?
Wow, he has grown so much. He has really come into his own and has a valued opinion when it comes to the arrangements.

Duane has been gigging with Devon Allman as of late. Have you seen them perform together, and what are your thoughts on that collaboration?
No, but they have talked about it for so long that I'm glad to see it happen. They will be on almost all of my shows this year.

Damon Fowler will be the third guitarist onstage with the Dickey Betts Band. What led you to add him?
Duane saw him play and sat in with him. We were only going with me and Duane for this band but, after we saw Damon, it was a natural fit.

Over the years, Gregg sang a number of compositions that you wrote. Did you tailor those tunes for him in any special way, and can you talk about his gifts as an interpreter of songs?
No, they just seemed right for him. He had a knack for making a song special.

In recent years, there were rumors that you and Gregg might return to the stage together. How close did this come to fruition?
Our managers had discussed it, but life just kind of happened and we never got to play. We did talk a lot before he passed.

Do you have a favorite original song that you've written over the years?
No, not really. They all have a special meaning for me.

Fans were excited to see you perform with the Tedeschi Trucks Band at the Beacon Theatre a few years ago. How did that come about and do you have any particular memories of that night?
Derek called David Spero, my manager, and invited me. I've loved him as a player since he was 12. Susan used to watch us play from the side of the stage. I think it's how they met. They are both very special to me. I mostly remember the introduction they gave me that night: "Please welcome the great and loveable Dickey Betts." I've never been called loveable before. I laughed all the way to my amp.

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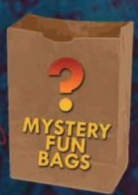

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